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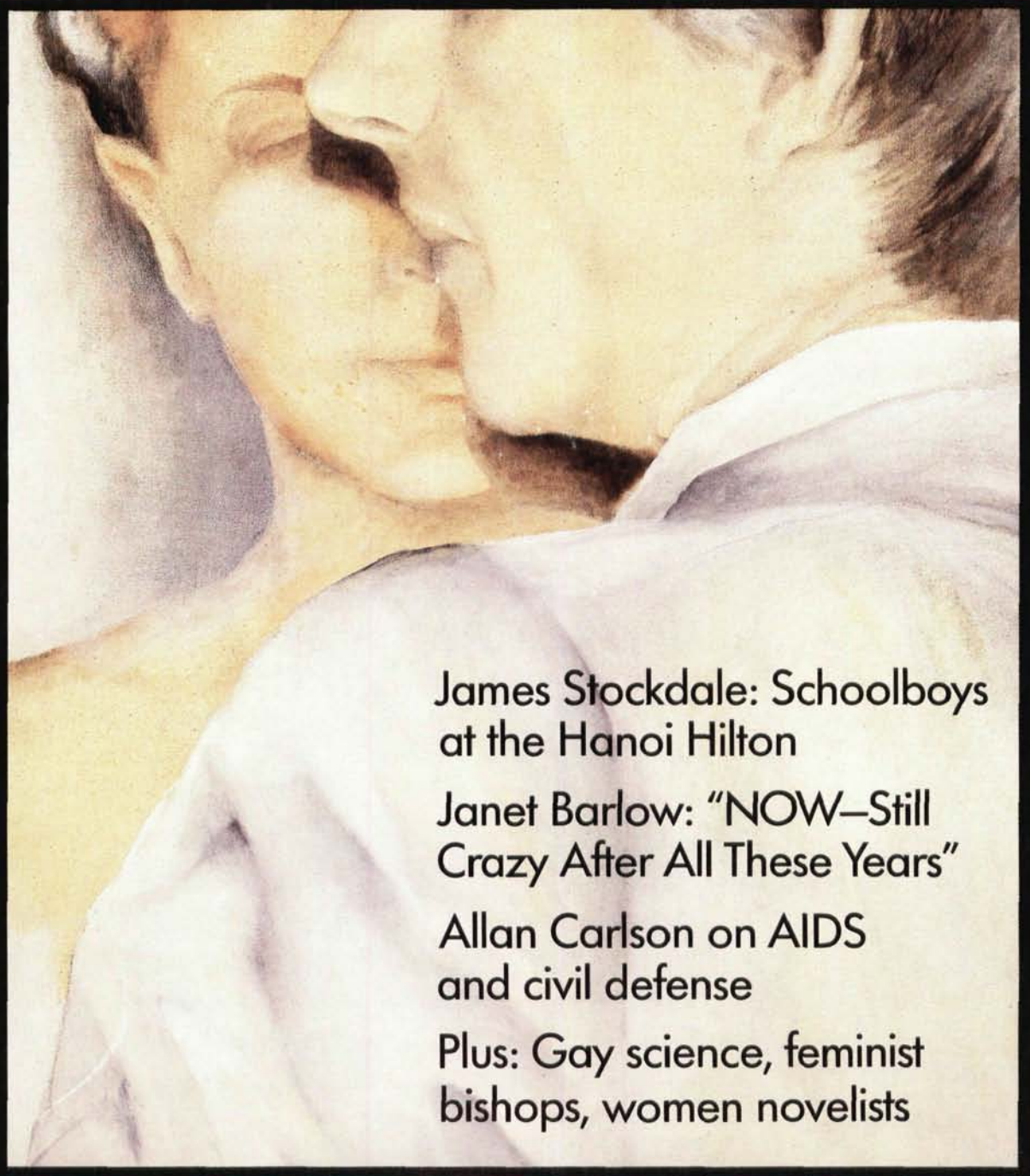
Chronicles

A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE

MASCULINE FEMININE NEUTER



James Stockdale: Schoolboys at the Hanoi Hilton

Janet Barlow: "NOW—Still Crazy After All These Years"

Allan Carlson on AIDS and civil defense

Plus: Gay science, feminist bishops, women novelists

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Chronicles
A MAGAZINE OF AMERICAN CULTURE
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CONTENTS

MASCULINE FEMININE NEUTER

CULTURAL REVOLUTIONS

Out to make trouble: feminist bishops, Surgeon General Koop, and Soviet veterans. 4

PERSPECTIVE

Still Crazy After All These Years 6
NOW is falling in love again with the family.
by Janet Scott Barlow

VIEWS

Learning Goodness 9
Stanford's Western Civ gets tested in Vietnam.
by James Bond Stockdale

Emily and the Feminists 12
The first victims of feminist lit crit are women writers.
by Thomas P. McDonnell

Prophet of the Left 14
Ragged Dick wins fame and fortune as leftist professor.
by George Watson

Barbara Pym's Unsentimental Eye 18
How a gentle novelist became chief pathologist of the British disease.
by Jane S. Shaw

Homosexuality and the Family 21
. . . just like the boy who married dear old dad.
by Edward M. Levine

OPINIONS

In Praise of Toughness 23
—*The Failure of Feminism* by Nicholas Davidson
by Michael Levin

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Art as Politics: Rebecca West's Unpleasant Mirror 26
—*Rebecca West: A Life* by Victoria Glendenning
by Ana Selic

Decency Through Strength 28
—*Right From the Beginning* by Patrick J. Buchanan
by Clyde Wilson

Stardust 31
—*Source* by Fred Chappell
by Dabney Stuart

The Genuine Article 32
—*Going Over East: Reflections of a Woman Rancher* by Linda M. Hasselstrom
by Jane Greer

Recovering the Medieval Family 33
—*Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages* by Frances and Joseph Gies
by Bryce Christensen

Sexual Habits 34
—*Love Is For Life: A Pastoral Letter Issued on Behalf of the Irish Hierarchy* by Thomas Cardinal O'Fiaich, Archbishop Kevin McNamara, Archbishop Joseph Connane, and Archbishop Thomas Morris
by Thomas Fleming

A Hatchery at *The Nation* 35
—*Freda Kirchwey: A Woman of the Nation* by Sara Alpern
by John C. Chalberg

CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Chile by Geoffrey Wagner 37
Letter From Boyhood by John W. Aldridge 38
Letter From Albion by Andrei Navrozov 39
Letter From the Lower Right by John Shelton Reed 41

VITAL SIGNS

SCREEN

The Vanishing Adult by Richard Hobby 42

POP CULTURE

The War Toys Meltdown by Betsy Clarke 45

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On 'Yale Scholar's Articles Found in Nazi Paper' 47
The Editor Replies 47

DEPARTMENTS

POETRY

Poem by Walter Albert Mahler 17

REVISIONS

Family Traditions: *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives* 8

BOOKS IN BRIEF

38

On the Cover

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Sex and the clergy have never made a good combination, and when the nation's Catholic bishops wrote a draft letter on the status of women, we could just about predict the outcome. The time has passed when clergymen shepherded flocks or attended to questions of the eternal. Men of the cloth now keep busy scrambling to keep up with the latest in progressive fashion. In previous letters the bishops have accused America of militarism, racism, and (in the Rev. Jesse's phrase) "economic violence." In this missive they discover a sin that was somehow left off the Seven Deadliest list: the "sin of sexism."

As the bishops reveal, they have "collectively" undergone "a profound examination of conscience" and have found that "sexist attitudes" have "colored church teachings for centuries." In penance, the Church must embrace feminism. The bishops endorse day-care centers, parental leaves without loss of job status, affirmative action laws, and "flex-time, job sharing, and comparable pay for comparable worth." They note sympathetically that "many Catholic women" find the Church's traditional emphasis on the permanence of marriage, the value of motherhood, and the importance of chastity to be "countercultural" bulwarks against social trends. Far be it from the bishops to resist the trendy; teaching on sexuality now must be "compassionate," "practical," and aware that "as sexual beings" men and women find themselves "in unique, diverse, and complex circumstances."

Abortion—that great obstacle in the way of the bishops' progress in liberal circles—gets only the briefest mention in the 35,000-word draft letter. By their next sentence, they are falling over themselves to make amends, apologizing for the "pain and uncertainty" provoked by the Church's teaching on contraception. They want it known that "we especially encourage a spirit of compassion toward those who in good conscience have not lived in accord with the ideal set forth by the Church."

Pastoral letters usually consist of episcopal meditations. A large part of this draft letter consists of testimony submitted by "women's groups." The format resulted from objections that an all-male group has no business writing anything on women. No one was similarly troubled by the spectacle of men without wives or children lobbying for day care and a host of other measures disruptive of family life. The bishops know their audience, and they know that insensitivity to traditional families—unlike, say, insensitivity to lesbians—does not constitute heresy to the Powers That Be of the here and now.

The bishops urge that the Church ordain female deacons and otherwise move women into new "leadership roles" such as distributing Communion, serving on team ministries, providing "spiritual direction," teaching in seminaries, and holding top administrative positions in dioceses. But there has to be some limit to reform. Like the congressmen who vote for "civil rights" laws from which they have exempted themselves and their staffs, the bishops continue to bar women from their own ranks. Although they promise that in the future all male priests will be properly docile ("sexist attitudes" are "negative indications for fitness for ordination"), NOW will not be appeased. There is a principled argument to be made on behalf of the status quo, one based on Christian doctrine, natural law, and Catholic traditions. But clergymen who grow fat on praise from the Church's enemies are in no position to appeal to principle. (MK)

"Understanding AIDS," the U.S. Surgeon General's brochure on "public enemy number one," has been called the first mass mailing of a federal policy message to every American household. In fact, an earlier administration attempted to meet a very different public danger—nuclear attack—with a similar mail campaign. Comparison of the social assumptions found in each document offers an unsettling portrait of social change in America over the last quarter-century.

President John Kennedy, in a 1961 statement appearing at the height of the Cold War, pledged that "in the coming months I hope to let every citizen know what steps he can take . . . to protect his family in case of attack." Kennedy proposed mailing a booklet with this purpose to each American home. With 60 million anticipated copies, the document would be—in one aide's words—"the most widely distributed piece of literature in man's history outside of the Bible."

Using contracted editorial assistance from Time, Inc., the Defense Department's Office of Civil Defense produced a draft circulated among the Kennedy inner circle. Significantly, the document assumed that America was uniformly composed of suburban, middle-class families. In pictures and text, the booklet featured family teams of husbands, wives, and children, in their single-family dwellings, working together to prepare their homes for nuclear blast. They improvised radiation shields in basements, piled dirt around window wells, read books together in tidy shelters, stored supplies in their cabin cruisers, and worked with neighbors to build community fallout shelters which could double as an "after school hangout" for "gregarious teenagers . . . where they can relax with sodas and play the juke box."

Of course, American social life was more complex than this, and the implied political sociology of the booklet did not pass unchallenged (Ambassador to India John Kenneth Galbraith, on receiving the draft, replied with consternation: "The present pamphlet is a design for saving Republicans and sacrificing Democrats!"). Moreover,

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the language in the book often shifted to the absurd (one section heading actually read: "A Nuclear Attack Can Kill You but Its Dangers Can Be Avoided"), and the plan was finally downscaled to a printing of 20 million copies, to be distributed through local civil defense offices.

Nonetheless, the document viewed the fabric of American society as solid, moral, and ideal-driven, capable of handling the strains of civil defense. In his own introduction, Kennedy called on American families to remember the frontier experience, "where pioneers lived under the constant threat of Indian attack. If we are to maintain . . . the kind of nation they dreamed of . . . each of us must be willing not merely to die for his country; but to live for it."

The AIDS booklet from Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, now in the mails to every American home, offers an instructive contrast. The tone of urgency is the same ("you must discuss" these things); so is the enthusiasm ("Above all, keep an upbeat attitude"). The document does make a passing reference to "family" (though it prefers the phrase "those you love"), and it endorses "responsible behavior," "personal values," and "sex with one mutually faithful, uninfected partner."

However, its overall portrait of American society is that of a nation of autonomous, sex-obsessed individuals —a population fairly careless, whether it be while shooting up drugs or adjusting and lubricating condoms. It portrays a people unworthy of their liberty.

In its message to (and by implication about) every American, the document gives attention to the risk of catching AIDS through "oral, anal or vaginal" intercourse, cautioning that the anal sort is particularly "risky." It offers an interesting description of the passage of "semen or vaginal fluids" through "the vagina, penis, rectum or mouth." Kissing and touching bowel movements are OK, but "sex with someone you don't know well" is called "risky behavior," as is sharing needles.

Adapting the Dear Abby pose, Uncle Sam also offers citizens guidance on casual sex and condom use. Decisions on the former, the document says, should be based partly on the answer to the question, "How many people have they been to bed with?" Cautioning that "condoms are far from being foolproof," our government endorses the latex over the lambskin variety and suggests using spermicide in the tip and on the outside.

More important, though, are the photos. We see here only obscure groupings or single individuals, offering us warnings and sharing wisdom. Families are nonexistent. Children are primarily a small, special category of victims, their origin unrelated to the body fluids being passed out.

If Koop had mailed this booklet out 75 years ago, he would have been prosecuted under federal postal statutes for distributing obscene material. Even 25 years ago, as the Civil Defense book shows, America's public face was that of a moral, family-centered people. The AIDS booklet, though, is designed for a nation neither moral nor free. Its creators target the needs of an irresponsible, dependent population, citizens managed by overlords who encourage their pleasures and soothe their pains.

It may not be an accurate picture. The relevant point is that official Washington thinks it is.

—*Allan Carlson*

A new word, "hazing," has washed onto the pages of the Soviet press with the wave of *glasnost*. It denotes the harassment, oppression, and humiliation suffered by new conscripts, "greenhorns," at the hands of "grandfathers"—the Soviet term for soldiers who are nearing the end of their conscription term. The subject was broached by Yuri Polyakov in his story "A Hundred Days to the Discharge Order" printed in the November 1987 issue of the magazine *Yunost*. Polyakov gave a chilling depiction of the mores prevailing in today's Soviet armed forces, the hazing and the petty tyranny of the NCO's. Newspapers have been bombarded ever since with letters from readers—both laudatory and condemnatory. The national press is still pursuing the subject. The army newspaper *Krasnaya zvezda* recently weighed in with an article, "Beyond the Black Pale," by its special correspondent A. Khorev. He does not attempt to refute the fact of hazing in the armed forces but blames such "non-regulation relationships" on the "period of stagnation" in Soviet history. Of course, it is easy to agree with *Krasnaya zvezda*'s special correspondent when he observes that "it has long been known, correctly, that the armed forces are society in microcosm."

On the other hand, many members of the armed services, both privates and officers, attack Polyakov's credibility and declare, in articles and letters-to-the-editor, that hazing is a figment of the writer's imagination. Thus, the magazine *Sovetsky patriot* on March 2 published an "open letter" to the author of the hit story. The letter under the title "At Odds With the Truth" was penned by serviceman Yuri Fedorko, who insists that hazing is nowhere to be found in today's armed forces and that the environment described by Polyakov is nothing other than a "fictional, abstract army."

Unfortunately, many current articles and letter columns leave no doubt that hazing is very much in evidence in the services. Small wonder, for "the armed forces are society in microcosm," as *Krasnaya zvezda* correctly pointed out. So long as "regulation relationships" are being violated in society at large, how could the services escape the problem? Under the Soviet constitution, supreme power in the country should reside with the freely elected Soviets—from the bottom to the very top. In reality, the party and its "shield and sword," the KGB, wield monopoly power. Under the constitution, all Soviet republics have joined the union on a voluntary basis and can secede any time they wish . . . And so it goes in all spheres of Soviet life. *Glasnost* has merely highlighted what used to be hidden from view.

So far the Soviet press has given no evidence that career officers engage in "assault and battery." And so a question arises: if the planned reforms and "learning at the school of democratization" hit a rocky road and result in large-scale strife—like the current disturbances in Azerbaijan and Armenia —who will become the target of the resentment and hatred of the veterans who once suffered as "greenhorns" and subsequently meted out suffering as "grandfathers"?

—*Mihajlo Mihajlov*

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STILL CRAZY AFTER ALL THESE YEARS

by Janet Scott Barlow

After the 1987 convention of the National Organization for Women, *USA Today* published the results of an "informal survey" of 703 NOW members. Forty-seven percent of the respondents said that "women are doing worse in 1987 than in 1980." Twenty-four percent said "women are doing better." Half the members questioned believed that "NOW should focus more on family and child-care issues."

Through the responses of its own membership, the best-known feminist organization in the country shot itself in the foot. If a 47 percent plurality of the NOW members surveyed believe that women are "doing worse" today than they were seven years ago, how does this organization explain its own failure? If only 24 percent of its members can assert that women today are "doing better," how does NOW justify its existence? And how much more "focus" on their welfare can America's children bear from an organization which, by its own admission, doesn't agree on much and can't accomplish what it does agree on?

In an informal survey conducted in my own household, 100 percent of the women available for questioning (me) agree on the most significant single accomplishment of organized feminism: It has done more to undermine the public image of women and the real rights of children than any individual, group, or social/political movement in memory. As a result of 20 years of feminist protest, there are now two prevailing female stereotypes: the one feminism invented—the perpetual victim; and the one feminism reflects—the know-it-all malcontent.

Whatever happened to the supposed feminist role model, the self-possessed woman of assurance and purpose? She exists. In fact, she has always existed. It just happens that feminists don't like her. If organized feminism had the courage of its convictions, it would give its highest award to Phyllis Schlafly, a woman who, against great odds and with skill, determination, and confidence, took on a big bully and won. The problem is, the big bully Mrs. Schlafly took on was organized feminism and its pet project, the Equal Rights Amendment. And to compound the problem, she used in her challenge the first credential of her opponents—the perspective of the female citizen. Might not that fact of itself have given feminists, even in defeat, some measure of pride? But this was war; and you don't conduct war with a taste for irony or pride in your adversaries. Possessing only the courage of its prejudices and jealous always of its own political power, the women's movement looked at Phyllis Schlafly—a self-realized female if ever there was one—and saw not a role model but an enemy.

The movement's reaction to the example of Phyllis Schlafly was only one illustration of the hypocrisy of "sisterhood." From the beginning, organized feminism was its own worst enemy, the best excuse to avoid any legitimate issues it may have raised. Because women activists were obsessed with making noise and placing blame, it never was possible to consider any individual feminist question on its merits. And some questions did have merit. Any woman over the age of 40 who has not experienced at some time, in some context, a man's prejudgment of her attitudes or abilities is, it seems to me, a woman either quite exceptional or very distracted. There was a time when I thought that feminism had made one small contribution—singular and highly qualified, but positive—by bringing the experience

Janet Scott Barlow covers popular culture from her home in Cincinnati, Ohio.

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to light. I was wrong. For the list of feminist complaints proved to be endless, and each grievance was as important as the others. Five minutes into a discussion of equal opportunity in the work place (which feminists quickly contorted into the demand for quotas and the concept of "comparable worth") and you were hearing about "psychological rape," the rights of lesbians to adopt children, and the pressing necessity for gender-free terms like "chairperson." Five minutes more and it had been decided that all institutions, roles, and responsibilities required nothing less than radical "redefinition." Every human relationship was politicized; and in the process, the public image of men became almost as repellent as the public image of women.

Feminist redefinition offered not only the self-fulfilled woman (so long as she wasn't Phyllis Schlafly) but also the reconstructed man: open, sensitive, "unthreatened"—a composite of those ubiquitous movement tag-alongs, Phil Donahue and Alan Alda. The sexist male was replaced with the honorary woman. And if you managed to snag one of these guys, or remodel the wreck you already had lying around the house, what a utopia was yours. After a day careering and a session with your (female) lawyer to discuss your latest sexual discrimination suit, you could come home to your own personal Phil-Alan, a husband who was perfect because his dearest desire in life was someday to be exactly like you. (If you were one in a million, like Mrs. Dustin Hoffman, you had a husband who went all the way, whining in public about being denied by biological fate the joy of ever bearing a child. Some girls have all the luck.) Children? Not counting Phil-Alan, you had one; but unfortunately—it really wasn't fair—you had been forced to agonize a great deal about your life-style and listen to the loud tick-tick of your biological clock before deciding to become a mother. Once your child got here, your first question was, naturally, "Who'll take care of him?" Not to worry. There was always Phil-Alan, and infant day care, and various "support systems." And if you suffered a little conflict over this situation, if something—love? common sense? instinct?—told you that no matter what system was supporting you the emotional burden of your child's day-to-day well-being was first yours, his mother's, well, you could simply demand from Phil-Alan a pledge to fully share your conflict.

This was the cure? Then bring back the disease, which might be kept in check with a simple back-to-basics regimen: Judge people one at a time; live by the Golden Rule when possible; when not possible, employ the Other Rule, most succinctly expressed on the streets of Chicago during my youth in that wonderful city, to wit: Don't take nothing off nobody. This three-part program was reasonable, workable, and—holy cow!—sex blind. Best of all, it freed both men and women to look upon children as something more than a predicament, a problem to be reassigned, redefined, or palmed off.

By considering children always as abstractions, the women's movement raised an obvious question that never went away: Did feminists *enjoy* kids? If they did they kept their pleasure well-hidden, for they discussed children with all the humor, all the *joie de vivre*, of a collection of hypochondriacs. The absence of humor was the least of it, however. Any movement that will reduce the rights of children to political barter while flaunting its concern for children's "welfare" is a socially untrustworthy movement. But feminism had revealed itself as exploitative and opportunist long before the movement decided to rescue America's youth (a frightening decision, since the mess from which America's youth were to be rescued was one feminists themselves—though this fact escaped them—had helped create).

Today's activist leadership never brings it up, but some women remember: Early feminists depicted motherhood as an awful condition, suffocating and degrading—psychic suicide. Motherhood: Just Say No. When it became obvious that this wouldn't wash, that nature had a voice of its own and many women were going to go right on having babies and making families, the movement shifted its "focus" to the lives of the women it once maligned and the children it once rejected. If mothers wanted to complete their Selves with a meaningful career, then they and their children had a right to adequate support systems. This one hit the fan with amazing speed, when it was discovered that every career is also a job and, even with Phil-Alan on the scene, you could exercise your options right into a state of nervous collapse. Cornered again, feminism then shifted its famous focus once more, this time to lower-income and single-parent families—women who, by economic necessity, *had* to work. It turns out that *these* are the women who need the support systems, and *theirs* are the children with the right to adequate care. And maybe this time it's true. If so, these families can only hope that feminist history does not repeat itself, that they don't end up "doing worse" seven years from now than they are today. But the situation does not look encouraging, because present feminist ideology demands that women have the right to equal treatment without regard to gender, and also the right to special consideration for their unique difficulties as women. Contained somewhere within this conflicting, politically self-serving ideology is, we are to believe, a solution to urgent human problems, including the problems of children.

The fact is, the feminist record on children stinks. Never once in its history has the women's movement come out unequivocally on the side of children's abiding needs. The reason for this is plain enough: Children's abiding needs put a real crimp in the feminist conception of "women's rights." The ultimate example of the feminist value of children is, of course, unrestricted abortion. Rights work both ways or they don't; human life is expendable for the sake of convenience or it is not. The women's movement exists on the belief that they don't and it is. And why not? When the right in question is to control one's own body, it is merely an act of justice to remove all impediments to that right. If feminists could sue fetuses before aborting them, they'd probably do that too. Not that abortion is easy. We must *never* assume that abortion is easy. One of the requisite support systems for emancipated women is counseling for "abortion trauma." Women, it seems, deserve not only the right to control their own bodies, they deserve understanding and sympathy for the emotional consequences of exercising that right.

Recent developments on other fronts have revealed even a feminist limit to women's management of their reproductive lives. The limit is surrogate motherhood, which feminists generally oppose because it reduces women to "wombs for rent." Whatever one thinks of surrogate motherhood—

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and personally I don't think much of it—the feminist position on this practice seems at the least inconsistent. If women are entitled by their right to body control to dispose of the babies they don't want, why does that same right not entitle them to have the babies they choose to bear? Maybe because all feminist reasoning is done with smoke and mirrors.

American feminism is a 20-year con. Today it combines a contradictory program of complete equality and special entitlements with a hypocritical brand of activism: expedient and self-righteous, high-minded and snotty. The final product is unnatural, exclusionary, *oppressive*—a guide to personal and social conduct that includes directions only on what to reject, protest, or undo. Life in the negative. Even on their own terms, groups like NOW are a fraud. How do you achieve a gender-blind society, if that is what you want, when your first priority is to promote the separate status of women as a special interest group? NOW's agenda is a variation of the old brain-teaser, "Don't think about elephants."

The current line on the women's movement is that it is trying to maintain its radical roots while stressing policies it hopes will be seen as more relevant and realistic than those of the past. While I have my doubts about any feminist perception of reality, it's for sure that the movement's roots are in great shape. Media coverage of the women's movement after the NOW convention included a television interview with Gloria Steinem and one of her feminist colleagues, in which Ms. Steinem babbled nonsensically about mutual "victory" for the sexes. Her colleague, charming as a brick, offered the strong opinion that the source of all conflict between men and women was "the act of intercourse."

Still crazy after all these years.

REVISIONS

Family Traditions

"History is bunk." Henry Ford might have been thinking ahead to all the social history written on women, marriage, and the family by distortionists like Lawrence Stone, Philipe Aries, and the feminists who fill up entire departments of history, classics, and modern languages. Obviously not all social history is bad or incompetent. Sir Geoffrey Elton is an unquestionably great historian, and John Demos' work on the American family is as intelligent as it is careful. Even feminists and women's studies specialists have turned out important work, but we have to go to Australia to find a credible symposium on the Roman family: *The Family in Ancient Rome: New Perspectives*, edited by Beryl Rawson (Ithaca, NY: Cornell).

Rawson herself provides a sensible overview of the Roman family as well as an article on the position of children. Solid contributions are also made by such distinguished scholars as J.A. Crook (on family law) and W.K. Lacey, and Suzanne Dixon offers a fascinating interpretation of Cicero's marital complications. Here and there one or another contributor lapses into feminist rhetoric, but the volume as a whole demonstrates that women's studies can make a useful contribution to any field.

One of the most fruitful approaches to the Roman family is by way of legal studies, a field to which J.A. Crook and Alan Watson have made important contributions in recent years. Even the curious reader, however, must some day buckle down and look at the texts themselves, and we are fortunate in having a new translation of one of them in print: *The Institutes of Gaius*, translated by W.M. Gordon and D.F. Robinson (London: Duckworth). The translation is lucid and highlights all the passages of Gaius that were reproduced in Justinian. Even more useful is the inclusion of the Latin text (of Seckel and Kuebler) on the facing pages and the discussion of technical terms. Gaius is indispensable to our understanding of Roman law and society and an interesting writer on his own account, and it is very good to have him available now in so helpful a format.

Closer to home in both time and geography is Jean Bethke Elshtain's *Women and War* (New York: Basic Books). Elshtain is among the best-known left-wing feminist scholars in the U.S., although her independence and intelligence have increasingly served to alienate her from the fanatics. Her most recent book is a fascinating combination of historical analysis and personal narrative. In Elshtain's view, the modern mind has been dominated by traditional images of the just warriors (men) and the beautiful souls (women and perhaps pacifists) who rise above the material level. Along the way she manages to discuss just-war theory, the ancient Greeks (on which topic a bit more research is in order), Clausewitz, and the Civil War, but she is at her best in attacking the universalism of liberal political theory and in attempting to reconstruct a genuine patriotism that is something quite separate from jingoistic nationalism.

The book would be worth reading if only for Elshtain's recollections of her own family's reaction to two world wars. Patriotic scoundrels did their best to make life miserable for German-Americans, especially in World War I, and it is interesting to speculate on the damage done to the American commonwealth by all that anti-German hooliganism. The largest and most civilized European ethnic population in the U.S. was told, in effect, that they had nothing to contribute to the nation, and it is hard to escape the feeling that the level of American culture—especially our schools, philosophy, and music—would be a good deal higher if we had not suppressed the German element. Antifeminists will be making a similar mistake if they ignore Jean Elshtain's contribution to feminist political theory. (TF)

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LEARNING GOODNESS *by James Bond Stockdale*

Why Western Civ Is the Best Refuge in Adversity

It is ironic that the thoughts of this essay, extracted from a commencement address I gave at Claremont McKenna College in the spring of 1987, celebrate an old Stanford University tradition of submerging all students in the classical thought of the West as a precondition to graduation, no matter what their major. This spring of 1988, the Stanford University administration threw that all out the window and knuckled under to campus political pressure to permit students to ignore the writings and thoughts of those ancient "white European males." This came as no surprise to me. A full course concentrating on such thoughts, which I had taught on request, separate from my duties as a Hoover Institution Fellow and free of charge, was mysteriously removed from the catalog over two years ago. Ideas of the sort you read below do not fit on this campus any more. I guess that's what comes of leaving curriculum design to those who have known little but the easy life.

—James Stockdale

The best education, the best preparation for a full and successful life surely entails a proper blend of classical and contemporary studies. While we pursue the keys to the kingdom of modernity—studies in political science and economics and high technology—we need to understand the importance of a broad background in the readings of antiquity, those readings that form the basis of our civilization. In times of duress, in war especially, is that classical background important.

Achieving that magical combination of ancient and modern grounding took me half a lifetime to improvise. I grew up as a veritable prince of modernity; as a young man I was a test pilot, flying supersonic fighters when they were headline news and sharing a schoolroom with future astronauts. Then, at 37, too late for graduate school in high tech, a turn in my life took me to the quite different atmosphere of the study of moral philosophy. By that I mean old-fashioned philosophy—Socrates, Hume, Mill—mixed with literature with moral overtones—Shakespeare, Dostoyevski, Camus, and the like. I was deeply exposed to the thoughts and actions of men of the ancient past, of mankind dealing with Ultimate Questions.

In the course of my study of moral philosophy I have been privileged to have had wonderful mentors. One was Phil Rhinelander at Stanford. He introduced me to the great stoic tract by Epictetus, *The Enchiridion*, and explained that Frederick the Great never left on a campaign without having a copy in his knapsack. Three years later I was slapped in a political prison for four years of solitary confinement—in the very world of Epictetus. Another mentor was Joe Brennan of Columbia. He came to the Naval War College when I was its president to help me introduce moral philosophy there. For 10 years he has taught a course in "Foundations of Moral Obligations." He has taught a generation of Navy and Marine Corps leaders, and they are better leaders for having taken his course. Those two mentors, despite their differences, had a great deal in common; each had one foot in modernity, one in antiquity. They gave me much. They led me to a treasure of striking insights such as this one by Mark Van Doren: "Being an educated person means that given the necessity [after doomsday, so to speak], you could refound your own civilization."

The Stoics said that "Character is fate." What I am saying is that in my life, education has been fate. I became what I learned, or maybe I should say I became the distillation of what fascinated me most as I learned it. Only three years after I left graduate school, I participated in the refounding of my own civilization after doomsday, when the giant doors of an Old World dungeon had slammed shut and locked me and a couple hundred other Americans in—in total silence, in solitary confinement, in leg irons, in blindfolds for weeks at a time, in antiquity, in a political prison.

That refounded civilization became our salvation. Stripped to nothing, nothing but the instincts and intelligence of the ancients, we improvised a communication system dredged up from inklings of a distant past (actually the tap code of Polybius, a second-century Greek historian with a flair for cryptography), and lived on comradeship in a

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polity that would have been a credit to Polybius' Athens. The spiritual power (not necessarily religious) that seeped into us as we surreptitiously joined forces against our common enemy came as a surprise.

In my solitude the impact of this unexpected spiritual power sometimes caused me to wonder. Does modernity (post-Enlightenment life under big governments and big bureaucracies, constantly competing to remake the world in the image of the new) deaden our noblest impulses? Does it smother or atrophy the power of the human spirit, the power of human nature? Do the readings of ancient times, the classics, serve merely to give us insight into the events of the past? Or do not the texts of those self-contained cultures of antiquity portray human power in all its vibrant potential? Do they not contain evidence of a more imaginative and fundamental grasp of the essence of being human than can be found even in 20th-century texts that have since joined the classics on the humanities shelves?

In Homer's immortal epic, *The Iliad*, as Hector is about to leave the gates of Troy to fight Achilles—knowing, as he must have known, that he would lose and he would die—he says goodbye to his wife and baby son at the gates, and the baby starts to cry, frightened by the nodding of the plumes on his father's shining helmet. Some would think the tale of the Greek-Trojan War to be an irrelevant relic of bygone days. Some would think it should be stricken from the reading list because it glamorizes war. Some would think that now at last, with reason to guide us, we can scoff at a warrior's suicidal obligations. But others of us react quite differently, seeing in that scene a snapshot of the ageless human predicament: Hector's duty, his wife's tragedy, Troy's necessity, the baby's cry . . .

My reaction, of course, is the latter, not only because I am a romantic by nature, but because by the time I first read *The Iliad* I had lived in antiquity (and I am not referring to the lack of electricity or plumbing). I had lived in a self-contained culture, a prison culture I watched grow among men of goodwill under pressure. I knew what it was to be a human being who could be squashed like a bug without recourse to law, and I knew that the culture, the society, that preserved me had to be preserved or nobody had anything to cling to. I knew that civic virtue, the placing of the value of that society above one's personal interests, was not only admirable, it was crucial to self-respect, and I knew that to preserve that culture, sometimes symbolic battles had to be fought before real battles could start. I knew that obligations, particularly love and self-sacrifice, were the glue that made a man whole in this primitive element, and I knew that under the demands of these obligations being "reasonable" was a luxury that often could not be afforded.

I also knew during this prison existence that I was being shown something good—that life can have a spiritual content one can almost reach out and touch. I suppose it can always have that, but I was used to the idea of it being fuzzed up, powdered, fluffed, and often ridiculed here in manmade modernity, where changing the world takes precedence over understanding it, understanding man himself.

The same message comes through in the writings of Fyodor Dostoyevski, Arthur Koestler, and Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn. They've been where I've been. So had Miguel Cervantes. This future author of *Don Quixote* was a young officer in the Spanish army taken prisoner after the Battle of Lepanto in the 16th century. He spent seven years in an Algiers political prison. Same story: "Confess your crimes," "Discredit yourself," "Disavow your roots." He was tortured to disavow Christianity; he could get amnesty and go home if he would disavow it. I was made much the same offer. I was to disavow "American Imperialism." Good boy, Cervantes, you hung in too. You knew how this age-old game is played. Political prisons are not just sources of fables of the past. They could just as easily inspire the literature of the future. Unable to tolerate dissent, totalitarian governments must have them. How else to suppress and discredit their enemies within?

You know, the life of the mind is a wonder—the life of the mind in solitude, the life of the mind in extremis, the life of the mind when the body's nervous system is under attack. If you want to break a man's spirit, and if your victim's will is strong, you've got to get physical. Sometimes you might think that you can unhinge strong people with psychological mumbo jumbo. Sorry, there is no such thing as brainwashing. But even physical hammering will not alone change all hard-set attitudes. The real method to jellify those attitudes, that is, to extract those seemingly heartfelt "confessions," is the artful and long-term imposition of fear and guilt. Solitary confinement and tourniquet-tight rope bindings are mere catalysts for the fear and guilt conditioning. Remember, I'm talking about strong-willed victims. They're going to make you hurt them. They know from experience that the compliance extracted by brute force is in no way so spiritually damaging as that given away on a mere threat. And they have learned from experience that in the end it is a spiritual battle. The leak in the dike always starts from within.

How does the mind of the victim respond to these challenges? How did we respond in those North Vietnamese prisons? Realize the situation here: They've got man in a laboratory test that no university in the United States could set up. They're not going to leave him in a room just to fill out a bunch of questionnaires, or give him some innocuous maze to work his way out of. They're going to boil the *essence* out of him as a chemist would heat and pressurize a specimen to study its properties, its nature, in a laboratory. What is the nature of man? What surprises does human nature have in store under these conditions?

First, regarding the loneliness, the solitude: It's not as bad as you think. Don't forget, the time factor is stretched out way beyond most psychological experiments. There was a professor at Stanford who got national attention several years ago for locking some students in the basement of a library for a few days, and then writing a book about his observations of their behavior. I laughed when I read it. You don't know the first thing about a person until he has been in the cooler for a couple of months. He has to first go through the stage when he is preoccupied with going insane. That's a normal prelude without lasting significance. Figure on that phase lasting for the first three to four weeks. It ends when it suddenly dawns on him that he'll have no such luck; he's stuck with himself. Almost everybody then sets himself up in a ritualistic life. Something deep-seated in human nature likes, feels safe with, repetition—a time for this, and a time

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for that, repeated regularly every day. You get to thinking about how liturgies of worship must have gotten started in some prehistoric clan.

Your mind drifts to many anthropological questions. How do institutions and governments get started? Are they the product of a man on a white horse? Does some powerful person impose rule: "We gotta get organized; here are the tribe's rules; break 'em and I'll cave your skull in." I doubt it. When you're scared (and that's probably why people grouped into those first crude polities—fear of predators, human or otherwise), you don't feel the urge to take charge. And when you're expected to, by virtue of heredity in clan or tribe, or seniority, for sure, among military prisoners, on first contact you seem compelled to say something becoming a well-brought-up American boy, like: "In these circumstances when you are being threatened or tortured to do things that offend your very being, I can't bring myself to order you to do this or that. Everyone must have the autonomy to choose the best alternatives facing him. Do the best you can and God bless you."

How civilized and compassionate! But it will never sell. Those fine young people in trouble won't let you get away with that. Their response is sure to be something like this: "You have no right to piously tell us each to seek out the good, and then back out of the picture. You are in charge here, and it's your duty to tell us what the good *is*. We deserve to sleep at night, feeling that at least we're doing *something* right in all hewing to what our leader says. We deserve the self-respect that comes with knowing we are resisting in an organized manner. We expect you to tell us to take torture before we comply with any of their demands. Give us the list!" There's nothing rational about such a reaction. Anybody could see that we probably weren't going to win the battle. But on the other hand, as the veteran prisoner Fyodor Dostoyevski aptly noted, "Man's most deep desires in life under pressure are not for a rationally advantageous choice, but for an independent choice."

On the parade ground, all the rankers vie for leadership, to be out front; but in a political prison, being the boss means you're the first guy down the torture chute when the inevitable purge starts. In that place, the drive for discipline and organization starts at the bottom and works its way up. Maybe it always does when lives and reputations are at stake.

How about the handling of fear and guilt? Those are determining forces in any life. You can't accomplish anything without a little of both ("fear of failure" can keep you going once you get started), but if you let them out of control, they'll tear the very core out of your being.

Did I say a little guilt—a feeling of inadequacy with regard to your duties—was a good thing? Most modern psychiatrists would have us float around on a pink cloud of emotional tranquillity, free of conscience's nagging, but you've got to have a goal if you're going for anything big. In Arthur Koestler's *Arrival and Departure*, the brain of a restless young southeast European exile, who is determined to get back into the fighting of World War II, is given a spring house-cleaning by a female psychiatrist, who finds him hiding in Portugal in 1940. "What's eating him?" his friends all want to know; "He's seen enough war," they conclude. Predictably, the psychiatrist finds the problem in his past, a troubled childhood, and after clearing him of his hang-ups (she thinks), she awaits him on a ship with tickets that will take them both to a safe, carefree life in America. At that point he runs aboard the ship only to divulge the shocking news that he has just signed up with British Intelligence to be parachuted as an agent behind enemy lines. Old prisoner Koestler writes him a notable farewell speech: "The prosperity of the race is based on those who pay imaginary debts! Tear out the roots of their guilt and nothing will remain but the drifting sands of the desert."

There's power in feelings of guilt.

Yet there's a devastation when it rises to such levels that it consumes you (remember, in your wartime prison cell you're waiting to be picked off by the first vulture to interrogate you), or when it creates self-delusion ("After all, I *was* tortured; maybe something came over me; my poor performance must not have really been my fault; I must have been broken or brainwashed"). Such rationalizations won't play well in the cold light of day when you're edging yourself out on the thin ice separating you from a nervous breakdown. And a nervous breakdown you cannot afford in this place. So there you are, wretched, about to sink into the Slough of Despond—bow first or stern first, depending on which crutch (consuming yourself or deluding yourself) you elect to use. Either will guarantee you the loss of your self-respect; that being all you have left, you have to learn to just sit there in your solitude and throw away both crutches and heal yourself—there's no outside professional help available. You have to deal with guilt, eat it, if you will. You can learn to use its fire for what it was intended, a flame that cauterizes your will to make you stronger next time. Of all the challenges guilt brings in a political prisoner's life, working off the feeling of having brought harm to a fellow inmate is the most demanding.

Later, out in public, you have no recourse but to join in the inevitable discussion of your so-called "agony" in prison: "How was the food?" "Did you get any fresh air?" "Were you warm enough all the time?" "Did you have any feelings of friendship for your captors?" "How was the mail service?" But when you get one old political prisoner alone with another, they exchange tales of a quite different nature, of nervous exhaustion, uncontrollable sobbing in solitude, the wages of fear, and the feelings of inadequacy, of guilt. It doesn't do to discuss these matters with strangers; they put you down as some kind of wacko.

But believe it or not, as time wears on in solitary you get better at dealing with these matters. The ultimate accommodation with them comes from focusing intensely on leading a very, very clean and honest life, mentally and otherwise—and you find yourself being consumed in a strange, lasting, and unexpected high-mindedness. By this, I don't mean "joyfulness," and I particularly don't mean "optimism." (In *Man's Search for Meaning*, Viktor Frankl makes the point that babbling optimists are the bane of existence of companions under stress. I totally agree with him—give me a pessimistic neighbor every time.) What I mean by the setting in of high-mindedness is the gradual erosion of natural selfishness among people of goodwill facing a common danger over time. The more intense the common danger, the quicker the "me-first" selfishness melts. In our situation, at about the two-year point, I believe most of us were thinking of that faceless friend next

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door—that sole point of contact we had with our civilization, that lovely intricate human thing we had never seen—in terms of love in the highest sense. By later comparing notes with others, I found I was not alone in becoming so noble and righteous in that solitude that I could hardly stand myself. People would willingly absorb physical punishment rather than let it fall to their comrades; questions arose in my mind about the validity of the much-talked-about instinct of self-preservation. Solzhenitsyn describes his feelings of high-mindedness in his Gulag writings in words like these:

> It was only when I lay there on the rotting prison straw that I sensed within myself the first stirrings of good. Gradually it was disclosed to me that the line separating good and evil passes not between states nor between classes nor between political parties but right through every human heart, through *all* human hearts. And that is why I turn back to the years of my imprisonment and say, sometimes to the astonishment of those about me, "Thank you, prison, for having been in my life."

Was I a victim? Not when I became fully engaged, got into the life of unity with comrades, helping others, and being encouraged by them. So many times, I would find myself whispering to myself after an exhilarating wall-tap message exchange: "I am right where I belong; I am right where I was meant to be." In all honesty, I say to myself, "What a wonderful life I have led." No two of us are the same, but to me the wonder of my life is in escaping the life Captain McWhirr had programmed for himself in Joseph Conrad's *Typhoon*: "to go skimming over the years of existence to sink gently into a placid grave, ignorant of life to the last, without ever having been made to see all it may contain of perfidy, of violence, of terror." And the author adds, "There are on sea and land such men thus fortunate—or thus disdained—by destiny. . . ."

Phil Rhinelander, my philosophy mentor at Stanford, died a short time ago. We were preparing a book together, and consequently I was with him almost every day at the last. He sat up in his bed at home, surrounded by his books and papers, writing on a yellow legal pad, never mentioning the cancer in his liver which he knew would take him in a matter of weeks (he was nearly 80). One of the last things we talked about was our agreement on a point we had each separately stated publicly: "The challenge of education is not to prepare a person for success, but to prepare him for failure." It is in disaster, not success, that the heroes and the bums really get sorted out.

Always striving for true education is the best insurance against losing your bearings, your perspective, in the face of disaster, in the face of failure. I came home from prison to discover something I had forgotten; in my old Webster's collegiate dictionary I had pasted a quotation from Aristotle: "Education is an ornament in prosperity and a refuge in adversity." I had lived in the truth of that for all those years.

EMILY AND THE FEMINISTS

by Thomas P. McDonnell

The centennial marking the death of the poet Emily Dickinson, on May 15, 1886, slipped quietly by a couple of years ago without noticeable effect on the national consciousness. The media in general, from the Sunday supplements to the guardians of culture on PBS television, were not, on the whole, visibly impressed. It was an anniversary which ought to have been the occasion to admit at last, in the waning of our own century, that Emily Dickinson has all but surpassed the most celebrated of the New England worthies. Emerson, the Sage of Concord, is more referred to than actually read; Thoreau has been reduced to the huckleberry guru of an ecological cult; and Hawthorne, with Melville the only major American writer of his time to recognize the existence of evil in the New Eden, wrote in a style which today seems too lugubrious for the modern sensibility to bear.

If so enthusiastic a reader as Emily Dickinson was no doubt familiar with both the prose and poetry of Emerson, he in turn was hardly aware of her presence as a poet. In any event, he would have recognized in her the genius that he had attributed to Walt Whitman at the beginning of a great career. It is ironic that Emerson was later to say of the novelist Helen Hunt Jackson, author of the early best-seller *Ramona* (1884), that she wrote possibly the best poetry on the continent, regardless of gender. More ironically still, it was this very woman herself, also born in Amherst, Massachusetts, who, quite alone among her contemporaries, came to recognize and privately champion the superior and strangely different verse by a young lady who lived like a bachelor in her father's house.

Perhaps too much has been made of the effect on Emily Dickinson of her several unrequited loves. Her all but secret passion, unaccountable for a woman in those days, was the profession of poetry. If, as an idealist of the romantic imagination, Emily had found that kind of love which in marriage must inevitably become domesticized, then in all likelihood she would have ceased writing poetry of the first order. As for the profession of poetry itself, Emily's kind of celibacy would prove to be as important to her, rightly understood, as a similar order of absurdity and single-mindedness must be to the celibate priesthood. When writing at the fullness of her powers, especially in the year 1862, she clearly recognized the extent of her own isolation and even put the gist of it in some very familiar, if sentimental, lines: "This is my letter to the World / That never wrote to me." She was no doubt the loneliest poet in the American literary experience. Not even the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, her contemporary in England, was more

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lonely than she.

(A personal interjection: I once contested a feminist on the claim that women in literature—as, admittedly, elsewhere—are discriminated against. The point had to do especially with the woman as poet. I said in defense of the typical male that I never considered it an anomaly that a woman might also be a poet. At one time, however, I had some difficulty in reconciling the notion of the female poet with what I now take to be Robert Graves's absurd theory of the "White Goddess." Still, the feminist accusation kept nagging at me. And then I recently came across Henry James's review of, yes, Helen Hunt Jackson's *Mercy Philbrick's Choice* (1867) in the Library of America edition (1984) of James's literary criticism. James could not have known at the time that the main figure in Mrs. Jackson's perfectly dreadful *roman a clef* is Emily Dickinson herself. James says: "And what put it into the author's head to make her a poetess and endow her with the 'poetic temperament'? These things do not at all hang together. Poets are not a literal but an imaginative folk, devoted to seeing the charm, the joke, of things—to finding it where it may be, and slipping it in where it is not." This from one of the most enlightened minds of the period. Therefore, concede the point to the feminists.)

Although, again, it was Helen Hunt Jackson who first intuited in Emily Dickinson something which only the feminine principle itself could have perceived, the poet would not have emerged into the modern consciousness without the work and scholarship of a few notable male critics. It is now some 58 years since Allen Tate published perhaps the finest single essay on Emily Dickinson—those by Yvor Winters, R.P. Blackmur, and Conrad Aiken notwithstanding—and yet, Tate, like the others, had to work with the gussied-up texts provided by Dickinson's earliest and least competent editors, whose immediate task was to make Emily acceptable to a turn-of-the-century audience. All subsequent studies and appreciations of the poet must remain in the profound debt of Thomas H. Johnson's body of work, both in the variorum and one-volume editions of the *Poems* (1955-57) and in the three volumes of the incomparable *Letters* (1958) published by Harvard University Press. Also of inestimable value is the mass of well-ordered factuality provided by Richard B. Sewell's great two-volume work, *The Life of Emily Dickinson* (1974), with its necessary context of the small New England community—pastoral, theocratic, and remote—in which the poet spent most of her life.

Nevertheless, with all this taken into account, we are still catching up with Emily Dickinson in the field of critical studies; and nowhere has this effort been more dazzling, more brilliant, and perhaps more excessive than in the works of the new feminist scholarship. If the centenary year of the poet's death was not exactly a media event in the public mind, the scholars have known for a good many years that there is something special about Emily Dickinson. There is an obviously clear and compelling affinity between her career and what it may mean to have been a woman and a poet in her time, and ours. So much is this the case, indeed, that the ground-breaking essay by the poet and critic Adrienne Rich, "Vesuvius at Home: The Power of Emily Dickinson" (1975), has been all but superseded by the

astonishing acceleration of studies in the following decade.

A decade after Adrienne Rich's still important essay, the most notable book to appear on the subject in the centenary year, 1986, was Cynthia Griffin Wolff's 641-page biography of the poet, *Emily Dickinson* (Knopf). Again, this may have been both the most notable and widely reviewed book of the year in that regard, but it is not by far the most important. The effort was indeed prodigious; but a more significant volume, published about the same time and hardly noticed by the reviewing press, was Paula Bennett's *My Life a Loaded Gun* (Beacon Press) with its particularly incisive essay on Emily Dickinson that cries for future in-depth treatment in a separate edition. For the time being, however, the finest of the Dickinsonian studies in 1986 may be the first American edition of Helen McNeil's *Emily Dickinson* in a low-priced Pantheon paperback. Also of considerable interest (appearing one year earlier than the occasion of the centennial) is *Emily Dickinson* (Berg Publishers, Ltd.), by Donna Dickenson. This little study is a most welcome antidote to the kind of criticism practiced by the Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar (*The Madwoman in the Attic*) school of feminism, which is filled with self-centeredness and enraged whining against a generally flawed patriarchy.

At this point, then, one must certainly face the problem of an excessiveness in Dickinsonian studies that is likely to impede an otherwise outstanding achievement. Even on its blandest levels, the excesses are nevertheless a hindrance. Several of Cynthia Griffin Wolff's conclusions are wholly unwarranted, such as (1) the alleged failure of Mrs. Dickinson to establish and maintain "eye contact" with little Emily at a crucial stage in the child's life; and (2) the notion that all her life Emily would wage an intense struggle against

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the male image of God as the biggest disappointment in her life, etc. Why these wild speculations which all but strip the poet of her essential and mysterious humanity? It is the theme of a book just out, *Lunacy of Light* (Southern Illinois University Press), by one Wendy Baker, that in the poetry of Emily Dickinson all references to light are basically derived from images of male "sun-power" against which a dark female creativity must strive in order to attain a viable identity of the Woman as Poet. One can almost take this as fairly acceptable, but not when it tends to put such an onus on what, in many instances, must have been an ingenuous and candid act of love's élan in Emily's praise of light.

Aside from this, it may be all to the good that feminist criticism has very justifiably appropriated Emily Dickinson to both its own interests and the larger literary interest. It seems obvious that even the best of male criticism on Emily Dickinson has failed to deal adequately with her status—and indeed her stature—as woman and poet. The woman as writer, and especially as critic, is the new perceptor in a field of letters heretofore the exclusive domain of the male academician. It is no detriment to present feminist criticism, as such, to suggest that much of its excess and rash overstatement will eventually fall by the wayside in a new progression toward a fuller and therefore more humane understanding of great writing and writers. It has already recognized in Emily Dickinson a truly original poetic genius, one of the few women in art who can accommodate such a claim, and it is a tribute to her toughness and strength of mind—as against the myth of her spinsterism—that in the midst of mediocrity around her, she did not go mad for want of recognition among those presumed to be her betters. The fact is she had no peers, let alone betters, and on this particular matter it is an ironic delight that women will have had the last word.

PROPHET OF THE LEFT *by George Watson*

I first met my future colleague Raymond Williams in 1959, when I was a young lecturer in English literature at Cambridge and he still a tutor in adult education in Oxford.

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His best-known book, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958), had just appeared—a late-Marxist interpretation of English intellectual life since the French Revolution—and what I principally remember from that first encounter was his glowing pride in the commercial success of the book which (as he explained) had greatly surprised his publisher, but not himself. "He is taking me to better restaurants for lunch now," he remarked, exuding pleasure.

In the almost-30 years that I knew him, down to his death in January 1988 at the age of 66, that paradoxical note was to be struck again and again: a fierce pride in capitalistic success and its consumer rewards, coupled with a fierce hatred of capitalism itself and its political and cultural pretensions. By mid-career in Cambridge, which he had reached as a Fellow of Jesus College in 1961 (the year *The Long Revolution* appeared), he was to become the proud owner of two country houses—one in England and one in his native mid-Wales—and the talk was much of hi-fi, wall-to-wall carpets, swimming pools, and color TV, while his chief passion seemed to be for American musicals—especially if they starred Sammy Davis Jr. or Doris Day.

But the usual jibes about parlor-socialists do not fit him exactly. He was so utterly open about being rich, as academics go, and about wanting to be richer. In any case there was nothing remotely grand or aristocratic about his style of life, as there was with his friend and rival, the Marxist historian E.P. Thompson. Williams was unpretentiously bourgeois; his talk was of shopping and brand names, not deer-parks and country mansions. Few I have known have enjoyed the delights of the consumer society so much; none, I believe, so frankly. (Indeed, he was fond of telling his Cambridge classes that people often bought things after watching TV commercials; and when their mouths puckered into attitudes of stereotypical disdain, he would add disconcertingly: "And so have I. Often.")

Hollywood might call it *The Williams Story*: from rags to riches and proud of it. It is a story that amply illustrates what

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New Yorkers call "making it"; and so many left-wing intellectuals in Britain and elsewhere have made it, in that sense, in the last 30 years, that the tale of the socialist fat cats will some day justify a volume, and perhaps a series. The London theater, for example, is full of them—some of them Williams' pupils. Their moral problems are intriguing. Most, after all, were bourgeois by birth or upbringing. Raymond Williams was not, and his perfectly good claim to proletarian origins is an essential part of his self-image, just as that highly cultivated self-image was an essential part of his career. His books, as reviewers often noticed, are all more or less about himself—a sort of continuous autobiography lightly masked as cultural history. The critical problem by the 1960's, which failed to prove insuperable, was that capitalism was actually not failing. There was nothing much in domestic policy in that age, as in the ages of William Morris or R.H. Tawney, to justify the Marxist myth of proletarian destitution or inevitable class-war. Nor was Britain, or any other West European nation, at war in Vietnam.

These disadvantages were overcome with astonishing ease. The Williams solution was to create a myth of a suffering being, glancing as he went at William Cobbett or Thomas Carlyle or D.H. Lawrence or George Orwell. From behind the sages of the recent past, a new sage was born. Even *Modern Tragedy* (1966), critical history though it is, begins with an account of the author's early life and an obscure reference to the sufferings of his parents in a Welsh village, presumably during the Depression of the 1930's. His first novel and his best, *Border Country*, is similarly autobiographical. There is no Death of the Author here, no mistaking intention. A Williams book is always a book about Williams.

His justification, perhaps, was that historical objectivity was in any case a bourgeois illusion. In a revealing review of Lionel Trilling's *Beyond Culture* (1966) in the April 15, 1966, *Guardian*, for example, he dismissed Trilling as one who had desperately adhered to the discredited "liberal idea of the self," in an age where individualism had already definitively failed. It had failed, Williams remarks, "because by definition it was open to an infinite extension of other people and classes, who then threatened the learned image of the self," meaning, I suppose, a newly conscious working class and the masses of the Third World. The passage is characteristically vatic, cloudy, and high-minded, as if a superior viewpoint had been effortlessly assumed. The bourgeois illusion, as it emerges, is the illusion of objective knowledge, and Trilling is bracketed with Nietzsche, Frazer, Conrad, Freud, and other deluded liberals. (Not D.H. Lawrence, since Lawrence was then supposed to be of working-class origins and therefore immune to criticism, whatever his debts to Nietzsche and Freud.) Trilling's folly was to suppose that individual mind can achieve truth:

> "Culture" is the inevitable and hated social process, "mind" is the individual, scrutinizing and separate. There can be no such separation between mind and culture, except in fantasy; but this fantasy is needed [by liberals] to preserve a threatened identity.

And every attempt since Matthew Arnold to rationalize liberal humanism, including Trilling's, "only prolongs the illusion."

That argument already smacks of another age. Indeed the claim that liberal humanism is dead—or for that matter that capitalism is dying—looks so much less plausible in 1988 than it did in 1966 that one realizes how fortunate Williams was to live and write in his time. He was a lucky author. In some ways he knew it, or suspected it. "That is not the way the world is going," I remember him saying as we discussed what Marxists had once supposed to be the inevitable immiseration of the working classes under capitalism and Marx's famous doctrine that revolution would begin in the advanced industrial states. His passionate espousal of Ho Chi Minh, both in print and in noisy demos outside the American Embassy in London—Williams wearing a cloth cap in the crowd in Grosvenor Square to assert his proletarian origins—was not a matter to discuss in his later years, after a united Vietnam had conquered its neighbors and become a Soviet nuclear base. In 1983, when he retired from his chair of drama in Cambridge, in his early 60's, he retired indeed, and his last years were not the most active as an author. His books are still in print (or some of them) and his name still reverenced by some middle-aged academic critics like Terry Eagleton who were once his pupils. But the world has not gone the way of Marxist prophecy since the 1970's, as he knew. The New Left that sprang into life in the mid-1960's, shortly after he came to teach in Cambridge, and which faded after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam in 1972, had been his theater; he had taken his chance in it, and starred there. For Williams was that rare thing among drama critics: an actor.

The act had many turns, though they all centered on the claim to proletarian origins and the sanctity of a working-class future announced by Marx and Engels in the 1840's. It called for some performative skills, since the humility of a remote provincial origin bore a little investigation but not a lot. Williams' father was a rail-signalman in Wales, indeed, but in a village only a hundred yards or so from the English border—its local town was Hereford, that comfortable cathedral city—and the boy went to Abergavenny School, a highly reputable place where he was well taught, winning a place at Trinity College, Cambridge, in October 1939. The Cambridge freshman was already a Communist at a time when the Soviet Union was in alliance with Nazism, and his activities in the students' union were devoted to opposing the war against Hitler and supporting the Soviet invasion of Finland. At that time, as I have been told by a contemporary of his, Williams affected an American accent in his union speeches, having seen Hollywood films and fearing that his Welsh accent—or was it Western English?—might be a social disadvantage. So a histrionic talent appeared early. After Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941, he served as an antitank captain in the Guards Armored Division, learning and forgetting (as I remember his telling) a little Japanese in the process, though he was never a linguist and made no claim to know Welsh. After the war he resumed his undergraduate life in Cambridge and completed his degree at a time when the critical prestige of F.R. Leavis was at its height, to become a total and dedicated Leavisite. It was here that the lasting shift from Party Communism to Culture Communism was completed. Some eager but

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inexperienced attempts failed to carry the Leavis creed into literary London through editing little journals in the manner of *Scrutiny* (though *Politics & Letters* managed to print an article by George Orwell), and Williams became an extramural tutor in Oxford, Hastings and Oxford again, where his reputation was one of a carefully minimal performance of his duties. (He would give his classes, that is, but seldom linger to converse with students or colleagues.) And so on to a Cambridge college fellowship and a chair . . . Not the worst or direst of careers in a century marked by great catastrophes, but a privileged education and a privileged life ending in affluence. Williams was an insider who always preferred to deny he was that.

The contradictions multiply. Though a professor of drama, he disliked theater, and I can never forget his astonishment when he heard I had just been to see a play for fun—or the alacrity with which he left a promised performance by an experimental theater company in a Cambridge college because one glance suggested the room was full. Though avowedly a proletarian, his personal manner was faintly grand, almost ducal, and his thick tweeds and garrulous voice suggested a country gentleman. Though proud of his polemics, which were always thick with the promise of an intellectual defiance of established custom and political "challenge" (a very favorite word), his published prose was abstract, bookish, polysyllabic, and eiderdownish, so that one felt less challenged than soothed. The famous parliamentary phrase about being savaged by a dead sheep might have been made for his longer writings. Though radical in curricular terms and hostile to the conventional teaching of English, as he imagined it, he passionately favored an interdisciplinary system that would necessarily involve the subjection of pupil to teacher. And though a successful teacher, he did not exactly teach.

His cult was other. Though he seldom, if ever, stooped to read or mark a student paper, delegating such humble chores to graduate students, and though he seldom if ever read the drafts of a graduate thesis, being too busy with his own works, he was more often loved than hated, and his students found his personality gratifying. Even those who volunteered the view that he wholly neglected his teaching duties could do so in an indulgent and forgiving tone, as if sheer acquaintance compensated for any dereliction of duty. To ask why is to pose a question at once literary and political. The literary aspect is that Williams, as a Leavisite, never doubted that teaching was a coterie activity in 1945-46, in a fashion total and unquestioning, even picking up his master's habits of style and use of key terms like "central." Williams' elaborate syntax was Leavis', as Leavis' (in derivation at least) was Henry James's: a system of controlled interpolations suddenly emerging in a resolution which one is given no choice to rebut. As a teacher, I suspect, he knew no other style. Teaching had nothing to do with the passage of information, and little to do with imparting a technique. It was a moral position taken up and struck—"Here I stand . . . "—to be admired and accepted. When Leavis died in Cambridge in 1978, Williams gave an admiring lecture on his dead master in which he concluded that, with all his faults, Leavis compelled admiration because he was *intransigent*. All that is faintly unusual in British academic life, which is marked rather by a continuous readiness to discuss and to argue than by a propensity to pontificate, and I sometimes felt that the life of a French literary *maître* like Jean-Paul Sartre, whom he greatly admired, might have suited Williams better than a life in academia. He sought not the curious or the studious but the admiring. A university is less a place to learn, in his view, than a place to join a side, as he had joined the left and Leavis in their day, to promote a cause. That view found its answering call. Many an adolescent believes there are two kinds of professors—those who merely do the job, year after year, and those who make history. There were acolytes to be had.

The literary aspect was always marginal. The political was plainer, and no one ever doubted that all Williams' preferences arose out of that: his lifelong adoration of the sacred name of socialism. "Nothing matters but the reality of socialism," as he wrote in an article in 1961, in a phrase suggesting the dedication of an early Jesuit or of the Moslem hordes that swarmed across the Mediterranean in the seventh century. It is understandable if Americans find it hard to understand the moral prestige of the word in western Europe, since no socialist government has ever honored its promise of freedom without poverty, and few enough have succeeded in advancing the living standards of working people. The two Germanies tell another story. Perhaps the question may now be relegated to history, since History (as Marx capitalized the word) has by now so signally failed. More and more parties in Europe called socialist are decaffeinating, so to speak, and abandoning the contents of their Victorian faith; even those in Russia and China are said to be experimenting daringly with private and competitive enterprise. The socialist day is done.

To adolescents of the 1960's, however, no such arguments counted. To be a socialist in that age was to be virtuous; and to incarnate the supposed values of a working class in manner and dress was to invest oneself with a secular

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles*:

Victims of Government

"Karl Marx always maintained that capitalists would readily sacrifice family life to the quest for short-term profit, and the great captains of industry seldom disappointed him. In the 1920's, for example, the National Association of Manufacturers struck up an alliance with the National Women's Party, the radical wing of the American feminist movement. Today, they embrace state subsidized day care."

—from "Charity Begins at Home: The Family and the Welfare State" by Allan Carlson

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sanctity. The New Left sage of that era was a haloed being in a priestless age—an age hungry for faith but incapable of faith in anything beyond the stars. The religious analogy is in some way uncomfortably accurate: by the 1970's the New Left was as quarrelsome in its internal relations as the early Church. Williams suffered from such quarrels, some of which were severely personal. Others were principled, as in his genuine horror of drugs, which he always refused to countenance, or his views about sex, which may be assumed to have been similarly old-fashioned since he was a good family man. "They have made a false connection," he once told me sadly of his followers when they refused to work for the local Labour candidate unless he pledged to support the legalization of pot. Drugs make for acquiescence, he explained, and are therefore socially conservative. I thought this one of his better arguments, and we were more often in agreement than either of us expected or sought. There were some positions he would not yield—not even for popularity.

Nonetheless, popularity, even sainthood, was plainly the goal of his professional life.

Perhaps my most vivid memory of him was his sitting with raised hand at a departmental meeting in about 1968, when a motion inane even by the standards of the time was under discussion. Alone among senior members he supported it—because the young did—and when his hand alone went up in its favor he turned to them with a defiant expression that said only one thing: "I, and I alone, am on your side." That was before the internecine era of the New Left had begun, and before his life had been saddened by the drift of student opinion away from revolution in the early 1970's, even from reform. He had been the Pied Piper of Hamelin, for a brief and heady instant, and he had loved it. But the Pied Piper of the old story led the young into a cave where they disappeared—all but one who was lame and one who was blind—and in the Children's Crusade of 1212 those who reached the sea were sold into slavery to the Moors. Nothing as dramatic as that happened to the acolytes of the New Left. They vanished, indeed, but not into slavery. They have comfortable jobs. Williams' influence, before it faded, was not vicious. It even stretched to the United States, where he publicly declined a rich post at an eastern university—I remember his eyes watering with desire as he spoke of the salary and free secretarial help that might have been his—on the grounds that he would not live in a nation fighting the Vietcong. For years he was London correspondent of *The Nation*. He lectured at Bremen University, too, notoriously the most Marxist institution of higher learning in the German Federal Republic. Forget what followed, then. He had his day.

He never lost faith. But his faith, or succession of faiths, became progressively harder to maintain, even to a mind always more convenient than rigorous. He had moved from the Communist Party to F.R. Leavis to the fierce but faintly nebulous nonparty Marxisms of the New Left, and so to an increasingly abstract belief in "structures of feeling"—the phase, derivative as it was, was one he always claimed as his own—and on to ever more abstract forms of cultural history, weak on fact but full of vague and virtuous imaginings. Though a professor he was never exactly a scholar, and one cannot easily imagine him with a learned journal in his hand or an archive at his fingertips, so that the usual tests of academic merit seem irrelevant to his case. His tone was moral, not factual. He was a sage and a prophet.

But his contradictions remain, a fascinating exercise for inquiry. A prophet of rural values, he would drive into the middle of Cambridge to walk in the city botanical gardens, since he found them more agreeable than the countryside around his village home. I never saw him walk, at least far, and he once told me wonderingly that he had never driven through Cambridge without seeing me on foot there. It was right of him to feel puzzled that the Marxian analysis of bourgeois values fails to fit my own case, but I do not know that he ever troubled to consider that it also failed to fit his.

His disdain for Trilling revealed a deeper contradiction. It is this: If, as he claimed in his 1966 review of Trilling, there can be no separation between mind and culture—if all mind is the creature of the culture that made it—then it is not an objection to Trilling's view, or any other, to say that it can offer no rational explanation of itself. No view could, if that were true. The terms of individualist philosophy seemed hopelessly self-contradictory to Williams, but the contradiction was his and not theirs. "Every attempt to rationalize them, to alter the superficial terms, only prolongs the illusion," as he put it grandly, calling for a "rational discourse of sustained argument" in favor of civilization. But all that is self-refuting. For if no mind can be separated from its culture, then the rational argument that Williams demanded, being itself a product of mind, could not be separated. And if it is an objection to an argument to say that it cannot be separated from the culture that sustained and made it, then it is an objection to all the arguments that there are or could ever be. Including Marxism, of course, which arose out of the highly special culture of the early industrial revolution in Europe. If all ideologies are false, then Marxism is false. But Williams believed that all ideologies are false, and that Marxism is true.

But then it was the hallmark of the New Left world, now remote enough to be identified and delimited, that it made for easy arguments and encouraged a retreat from debate when debate grew too hard to bear.

Poem

by Walter Albert Mahler

Never go home in the winter, friend,
when your roving days are done.
Go home in the spring with the lilacs
and the warmth of a noonday sun.

Never go home to a world grown grey
in the blast of the winter's gale,
when the earth is a hard and stubborn thing
and men walk stiff and pale.

Never go home in the winter, friend,
when the skies are a leaden pall.
Go home in the spring with the lilacs
or never go home at all.

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BARBARA PYM'S UNSENTIMENTAL EYE

by Jane S. Shaw

Admirers of Barbara Pym have several regrets. The greatest is that there aren't more of her novels. Pym would undoubtedly have written more had she lived longer, for her death in 1980 occurred at a time of renewed productivity. She certainly would have written more had she not suffered 14 years of publishers' rejections.

Pym's novels have a flavor all their own. "It is now possible to describe a place, a situation or a person as 'very Barbara Pym,'" writes editor Hazel Holt in the preface to Pym's letters and diaries. The initially striking thing about the novels is their quaint, "dated" quality. Set in and around London in the decades after the Second World War, they are filled with churchgoing spinsters, dowdy clergymen's wives, and busy "excellent women" (a phrase she used as a title); Pym writes about less-than-glamorous, often charmingly befuddled people.

Though most are light and satirical, the novels all have an underlying sense of resignation and defeat. Even with her first published and most cheerful novel, *Some Tame Gazelle*, a sense of cramped lives and forgone opportunities underlies the comedy. And the feeling only grows as we read the later works. Although there is little desperation or longing expressed in the novels, her protagonists convey an incompleteness and a partial failure that gives them a special appeal.

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It is possible to trace in Pym's diaries and letters a darkening spirit as the uninhibited, lovelorn (and continually disappointed) Oxford student turns into a woman who begins to realize that she may never marry. She passionately falls into love again and again, always to be rejected, and never to forget those old flames. In 1943, at age 29, she writes to her first love (long married to someone else) that yesterday was the 10th anniversary of the first evening they spent together. "Yes, it was in 1933 and we went to the Trout and played pingpong and ate mixed grill and the wistaria was out." A decade later, she writes in her diary: "To receive a love letter and to be eating honey on a June morning (in a bed-sitting room in London). This was in 1939—me in Upper Berkeley Street. The letter was from Jay and the honey from Jock (Miel d'Hymette) from Athens." Such memories and reflections dot the diaries.

Two events are equal in power to this continual disappointment in love: her publisher's sudden refusal in 1963 to publish any more of her novels and her surgery for cancer in 1971. Both clearly affect the tone and content of the novels.

But equally impressive is how her novels reveal the larger world around her and specifically the declining economic and social conditions in Britain. Though decidedly nonpolitical—they do not attack Britain's welfare state or even address it, they do not extol private property or even discuss it as such, and Pym does not blame her heroines' troubles on economic forces—Pym's writing faithfully depicts a decline of a world larger than the self. Yet, in her diaries, Pym even chides herself for ignoring world events: "It occurred to me that were I to look in this volume in three years time what dreariness I should find. One would hardly know that there was a war on at all, and certainly not have any idea that I was an intelligent and presumably thinking person. Or perhaps I do think a little, but not about anything that really matters to anyone except myself." Actually, her comedies convey, more effectively than economic treatises, Britain's poverty of physical goods and—far more important—its poverty of vitality and hope.

Pym published six novels between 1950 and 1961. Then, in 1963, her publisher, the British firm Jonathan Cape, refused to publish the next one. She revised it, to no avail, and wrote another, which she eventually sent to 21 publishers. All declined, and the literary world simply forgot Barbara Pym. At one low point, Pym wrote, "Now I just jot things down in my notebooks, lacking the courage to start anything again though I suppose I will one day."

In 1977, an article in the *Times Literary Supplement* reported that two prominent literary figures—Philip Larkin and Lord David Cecil—had cited Pym as one of the most underrated writers of the 20th century. That article launched a reappraisal of her work. Today, she is widely lauded, treated as a serious writer, and often compared with Jane Austen. All 12 of her novels, plus selections from her diaries and letters, have been published. Unfortunately, Pym's death occurred before she could experience the full

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flowering of critical attention.

Since Pym's novels never changed their approach or content (although Pym did consciously try to choose more "contemporary" themes), we may be tempted to conclude that her books were simply out of step with the unrestrained era of the 1960's, and the mounting costs of publishing. Yet, throughout her writing, while everyone else was dazzled by Twiggy and the Beatles, Pym captured a different and more penetrating picture of her country.

Isa Kapp, in a 1983 essay about Pym in *The American Scholar*, calls Pym's heroines "dignified anachronisms," and titles her essay, "Out of the Swim with Barbara Pym." But Pym is not a 19th-century writer who just happens to be writing in the wrong century. While her most memorable characters fuss over altar flowers and entertain curates on quiet evenings, she also has thoroughly modern heroines such as a successful free-lance writer and an aging woman who likes to spend evenings with a gay male friend.

Moreover, Pym's characters are "out of the swim" not because they ignore the 20th century but because they tend to hang back, instead of taking action. They are observers, interpreters (though less than fully articulate) of what goes on around them. Excessively cerebral, they ponder and worry a lot. They don't talk much about the decline of the English economy, but they see it, feel it, and resign themselves to it. (In the same way, they muddle through the sexual revolution.) Through their maunderings, Pym reveals not only the amusing and sometimes heartrending foibles of human beings but also the extent and depth of the "British disease."

Few of Pym's heroines dress well, for example. They shop at jumble sales and are often, like Emma Howick of *A Few Green Leaves*, "the type that the women's magazines used to make a feature of 'improving.'" The London flat of another heroine is furnished "in a way that is sometimes described as 'bohemian' but which is just as often the result of not being able to buy quite enough furniture and carpets."

Hardly anyone eats well. In the early novels, set during or just after the war, the plain repasts ("cold meat with beetroot and no potatoes") make sense. But by the late 1970's, people are still eating "macaroni au gratin with chips" and "baked beans on toast with a poached egg on top."

These descriptions are not inadvertent or inevitable. In real life, Pym liked nice clothes and enjoyed good food. "After dinner I changed out of my chiffon into my scarlet satin blouse and black skirt," she notes in her diary during her Oxford days. Her dinners ran more to "fish, duck and green peas, peaches and cream, sherry, Niersteiner and port" than to baked beans. But her novels are full of genteel poverty and accommodation to limited resources.

The dwindling of hope and expectation on a national scale corresponded with Pym's own experience, as we have seen, and with her psychological affinities as a novelist. In *Some Tame Gazelle*, though written in her 20's when she was still ebullient and full of hope, Pym captures the inner core of her first romance and gives it a dominant role. The comedy that she builds on this foundation is a testimony to her capacity for unsentimental observation.

In *Gazelle*, it is many years later, and the enthusiastic lovestruck girl has become Belinda Bede, an aging spinster who harbors a decades-long unrequited affection for Archdeacon Henry Hoccleve, a pompous lightweight long married to someone else. We learn how, over the years, Belinda's passion "had mellowed into a comfortable feeling, more like the cosiness of a winter evening by the fire than the uncertain rapture of a spring morning."

Quartet in Autumn (1977) brings together her personal experience and her understanding of the surrounding social conditions more vividly than any other. Written after Pym had given up hope that any of her new novels would ever be published, it also incorporates her experience of having cancer surgery. At the same time, the book draws a direct link between the stifling of economic opportunity and the crushing of human vitality.

In a society characterized by slow growth, the old hierarchies are the only hierarchies, and those who find a place there are the "old boys," often regardless of merit.

Quartet explores the effect of death and impending death on people who have little to look back on and nothing to look forward to. Four elderly people—Marcia, Letty, Edwin, and Norman—inhabit a world of unarticulated and barely felt emotions, share the thinnest of conversations, and take part in the dullest of routines. The interplay of their feelings is so subtle that the novel is difficult to synopsize—as its title suggests, it is more like music than a story.

These four work in an office together, but the reader never finds out just what they do. "The activities of their department seemed to be shrouded in mystery—something to do with records or filing, it was thought, nobody knew for certain. . . . The most significant thing about it was that nobody was replacing them, indeed the whole department was being phased out and only being kept on until the men working in it reach retirement age." (What more telling symbol of a once-vigorous nation on the wane?)

The four are not really friends, just office mates, but they are almost the only acquaintances each one has. When a tenuous relationship with her office acquaintances ends through retirement, Marcia becomes increasingly alienated and odd, rarely venturing from home, obsessively accumulating glass milk bottles and plastic bags.

Just as the unnamed office work is a pointless ritual that accomplishes nothing, the safety net of the social welfare state proves completely ineffective. It is not long before Marcia is found unconscious in her kitchen and dies soon after. Janice Brabner, representative of the welfare state—a "voluntary" social worker who talks about her visitations to the elderly as a "job"—worries over this event. Janice had tried to communicate with Marcia, but failed. And while she tells herself that Marcia's collapse "in no way reflected on the social services," she concedes to herself that "there might possibly have been a lack of liaison, that Miss Ivory might be said to have fallen through the net, that dreaded phrase. . . . "

Marcia's death gives her previously insignificant life a tangible impact. For Marcia owned property—a house. Through the disposition of that property, she changes the

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life of Norman, one of her three companions. Property, the relic of a more materialistic and supposedly less humane era, makes concrete the ephemeral connections between Marcia and Norman.

In most of Pym's books (which are far more upbeat than *Quartet*) social comment is less direct, but just as deeply embedded. In nearly all the novels, early and late, the low status of women is pervasive. Nearly all the women hold inferior, even menial jobs—in spite of excellent educations and apparent capability. Prudence Bates in *Jane and Prudence* is typical. An Oxford graduate, she is a "sort of personal assistant to Dr. Grampian," she explains. "I look after the humdrum side of his work, seeing books through the press and that kind of thing."

Parallel to the women's low status is their mental apathy or resignation. Prudence's friend Jane Cleveland, looking around during her Oxford reunion, observes how little the graduates have accomplished, in spite of their early promise. She thinks about her "own stillborn 'research,'" the subject of which she can't quite recall—"Donne, was it, and his influence on some later, obscurer poet?"

Jane goes on to express dissatisfaction with what she chose as her life—being a clergyman's wife. She had hoped to be one of those "gallant, cheerful clergyman's wives, who ran large houses and families on far too little money. . . ." But she had failed at that. She only had one child, while "other qualities which she did not possess and which seemed impossible to acquire were apparently necessary," she muses.

In contrast to Pym's women, who labor diligently at tedious jobs, the men they work for have generally achieved limited success—but not through hard work or even merit. Certainly, Aylwin Forbes, the supposedly brilliant editor of a literary journal in *No Fond Return of Love*, shows little competence. Jessica Foy, a librarian listening to him lecture, observes to herself that he has an "exceptionally able assistant editor" working under him (a woman). Aylwin, she is sure, knows little about the problems of an editor, even though that is the subject of his lecture.

Men like Aylwin usually have found a toehold in a solid, traditional hierarchy. While such sinecures are not especially rewarding, they supply the trappings of accomplishment. Aylwin has found his place in the academic-literary world, just as Archdeacon Henry Hoccleve finds it in the Church of England. In a society characterized by slow growth, the old hierarchies are the only hierarchies, and those who find a place there are the "old boys," often regardless of merit.

One of the ways to attain such a position is to attract competent and self-effacing young women to do the work and cover the failings. The women recognize the injustice of the situation, but accept it, even embrace it. "Research, with a good-looking man," Jessica says to another woman. "That's an enviable lot." Most of the women cater to the men's weaknesses. They aren't fooled—some mentally take note of how childlike and silly the men often are—but they go along.

How much of this lowly status and mood of resignation relates directly to Pym's own experience? As an editor employed by the International African Institute in London, Pym's day-to-day life was formally similar to that of women such as Prudence. But to Pym it was not "humdrum"; it was a job she took seriously and one that provided material for her novels. Writing to Philip Larkin in 1973, she remarks that the Institute (which, she implies, may have outlived its usefulness) "is a rich subject for fiction if one can look at it with a novelist's cruelly dispassionate eye, as I fear I sometimes can."

Like her heroines, however, Pym accepts the status quo when it comes to men. We see in her diaries how she kept on loving men who rejected her, and she rarely criticizes them or condescends to them (except in the case of Henry Harvey, her first love; even years later, her letters bristle with barely disguised anger). In her novels, we see what lilliputians Archdeacon Hoccleve or Aylwin Forbes are—and we sense the futility and absurdity of a society that elevates them to honored posts.

A few years ago, Michele Slung, writing in the *Washington Post*'s "Book World," described the world of Barbara Pym's novels as simultaneously "cosy" and "bleak." It is cosy because it is simple, humdrum, and physically secure. It is bleak because to live this way means that Pym's people, especially her heroines, have given up opportunities and withdrawn into narrow confines, both spiritual and physical. Together, the "British disease" and Pym's own sense of resignation dispassionately combine to create poignant comedies.

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HOMOSEXUALITY AND THE FAMILY

by Edward M. Levine

For nearly two decades, homosexuals and their sympathizers have increased their efforts to persuade opinion leaders, educators, clergy, government officials, and the public that their sexual lives, though different, are as normal and natural as the heterosexuals'. Since some heterosexuals also engage in sodomy, the homosexuals have claimed that it is only their same-sex orientation that sets them apart from heterosexuals. Regarding this as inconsequential, homosexuals go on to insist that a pluralist society should extend them minority group acceptance and status. In sum, they call for full social approval of their sexual identity and behavior.

Many of those who are familiar with these views consider it a mark of enlightenment and civility to accept them *prima facie*. They do so largely because homosexuals have led them to believe that homosexuality is an "orientation" or "preference" (choice) and is, therefore, as legitimate as any other.

It is well-known, however, that boys of elementary and high school age who are incipient homosexuals are typically subjected to the punishing taunts, derision, and ridicule of their peers. Both common sense and sociological role theory suggest that the desire of such youngsters (and adults) to avoid the rejection and enjoy the acceptance of their peers would alone induce them to spurn homosexuality, if it were really a matter of sexual preference.

In an unusually informative 1972 article little known outside the psychiatric community, Warren Gadpaille synthesized empirical studies of physiologists whose findings unequivocally show that human heterosexuality is established, in biologically normal individuals (including homosexuals), between the sixth and 12th weeks of fetal life. Hence, all biologically normal males and females are heterosexual at birth.

Other well-established evidence furnished by Bieber, Socarides, Stoller, Ovesey, *et al.* indicates that homosexuality results from an overpowering unconscious fear of heterosexuality, generally caused by a domineering mother and a passive-submissive, emotionally absent father (or the other way around).

The significance of these findings is that homosexuality is a psychopathological symptom that can be (and has been) cured in therapy—providing the individual wants to change (which most homosexuals do not). Even more important is that homosexuality can be prevented by parenting that fosters children's innate bio-psychological heterosexuality.

Yet, the thrust of the homosexual movement is to deny that homosexuality is psychopathological, that heterosexuality alone is healthy, and that sound parenting is essential to heterosexual gender-identity in adulthood. The logic of homosexuals' claim to normality leads them to reject the importance of marriage and family, of competent child-rearing, and of the moral values that serve as their foundation.

In 1973, yielding to great pressure from homosexual organizations and ideologues, the American Psychiatric Association (APA) initiated the change in its official diagnosis of homosexuality as psychopathology. The new policy declared homosexuality psychopathological only for those individuals who sought psychiatric treatment for it. The APA's policy change was followed, two years later, by the American Psychological Association. Both official views are still held up by homosexuals as definitive proof that homosexuality is psychologically and otherwise as healthy as heterosexuality.

These diagnostic redefinitions of homosexuality by leading professional associations have had an adverse impact that extends far beyond the views of therapists, homosexuals, and sexologists. Parents, for example, may be confused about how to rear their children if their values and intuition conflict with the official conclusions of the new priesthood. And their uncertainty will be sensed by their offspring who need parental support for their developing masculinity and femininity.

Parents who are indifferent about their children's gender-identity may very well place them at risk of becoming homosexuals, bisexuals, or transsexuals. Rather than admiring and reinforcing their sons' and daughters' sexual differences, some parents studiously adhere to the social fiction of androgyny as a biological fact. For their children, serious heterosexual dysfunctions are possible outcomes of being raised according to this contemporary mythology.

While a good deal has been written about the homosexu-

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als' sexual behavior that sets them apart from society, homosexuals rarely discuss this publicly. Their desire for respectability masks their obsession with sexual gratification as such, regardless of the degradation of both their and their sex partners' individuality. By their own accounts, they endlessly engage in furtive, promiscuous, and impersonal sex with utter strangers in public men's rooms, parks, bathhouses, and elsewhere. Some have reported having as many as 10 different sex partners during an evening, and in 1978 Bell and Weinberg found that 43 percent of the homosexuals in their study had more than 500 different sex partners in a lifetime.

As for homosexual couples, it is well-known and acknowledged among them that infidelity is their norm. Peter Fisher (1978) has candidly written that homosexual "love" is no longer expected to hinge on fidelity. As we are now aware, it is their sexual promiscuity that is largely responsible for the high rate of venereal and other diseases among homosexuals, as well as for the AIDS epidemic that has struck them and, through bisexuals, threatens the rest of us.

In the name of their right to indulge themselves in depersonalized sex, homosexuals have mounted a strong attack on the family as an indispensable institution. In 1971, for example, Dennis Altman, a leading and articulate homosexual spokesman, envisaged sexual liberation as putting an end to monogamy and "the nuclear family as the central organizing principle of society." Altman believes in communal child-rearing that would involve nonparent adults, including homosexuals. Such arrangements, he argues, are the only effective ways of breaking down the sex-role stereotypes into which the nuclear family "tends to force us."

Homosexuals now openly devalue marriage and family, proper child-rearing, and heterosexuality by insisting that they, too, are entitled to marry, retain custody of their children after divorce, and to adopt children. A few clergymen and more than a few judges accord them these rights—the clergy believing in the religious entitlement to marriage, the judges either out of fear or because they do not know of persuasive grounds for denying them child custody.

While most homosexuals apparently have not married, numbers of them have been married as bisexuals and had children. Bell and Weinberg (1978) reported that almost 20 percent of the male homosexuals and one third of the female homosexuals in their study had been married, some hoping that marriage would somehow cure them of their vice. Those who yield to it ordinarily divorce their spouses, causing tremendous shock and loss.

Their children, for example, somehow try to adjust to a custodial mother who dates women and may have a live-in lesbian lover. Others must visit a homosexual father who has left them and their mother for another man. All such youngsters are unreasonably expected to understand and approve the meaning and implications of a parent's homosexuality. Yet this surely eludes the grasp of younger children, and is by no means well-understood by adolescents—or necessarily accepted by any of them. Indeed, a parent announcing his homosexuality can weaken or badly confuse children's sense of their own gender identity—"will this happen to me?"

The total population of homosexuals is unknown and can only be estimated. If the most commonly mentioned percentage of male and female homosexuals in the population—2 percent (the figure ranges up to 10 percent)—is used, and if the most frequently cited ratio of homosexuality between the sexes (four males to one female) is also accepted, then there are approximately 748,000 male and female homosexuals in the population of unmarried individuals (37.4 million) from age 18 to 64. Of these, slightly more than 598,000 are males and 149,000 are females. Since the latter cancel out the same number of the former, there are about 449,000 male homosexuals who deplete the ranks of marriageable men. Therefore, there are 449,000 marriageable women who will remain single so long as their and the male homosexual populations remain constant.

If the homosexual population is estimated at 3 percent, its total is slightly over 1.22 million, of which almost 890,000 are male and about 220,000 are female. Canceling out the females with an equal number of males results in the balance of nearly 667,000 male homosexuals—the same number of heterosexual females who will, because of this depletion of the population of marriageable males, remain unmarried. Whichever figure is used, a huge number of women are deprived of the opportunity to lead satisfying lives within marriage and family.

Numbers of homosexuals remain religiously observant, and a few Christian and Jewish religious institutions welcome them either by holding special services or establishing special houses of worship for them, or by accepting them into their congregations. Nevertheless, the homosexuals' drive to win moral legitimacy must attempt to render both arbitrary and unjust the religious values underpinning the worthiness of marriage, family, and child-rearing.

Homosexual writers for some time have been critical of Judaism and Christianity because of what C.A. Tripp termed their "reactionary, anti-sexual" moral values. And Dennis Altman complained that "sex has been firmly linked, and nowhere more firmly than in Christian theology, with the institution of the family and with child-bearing. Sex is thus legitimized for its utilitarian principles, rather than as an end in itself, and marriage becomes a 'sacred partnership' entered into for the begetting of children. Even where sexual pleasure is accepted as a complementary goal, the connection between marriage and sex remains." Outraged by the religious support given to marriage and family at the expense of mere sexuality, homosexual writers argued for recognizing the "bisexual needs of human beings," and they bemoan the fact that Greek paganism, with its more open-minded view of homosexuality, was ever supplanted by Christianity and Judaism.

The kind of polymorphous sexuality to which he refers is truly typical only of very young children (who outgrow it). As far as scientific evidence goes, human beings have neither polymorphous nor bisexual *needs*. Yet, nothing seems to deter homosexuals from arguing as they wish to convince society that their goal of attaining moral approbation for perversion is a just one. This has been made all the easier for them with the waning influence of religion in an age when unbridled relativism and a narcissistic individualism have become the reigning standards.

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In Praise of Toughness *by Michael Levin*

"A system-grinder hates the truth."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson

The Failure of Feminism by Nicholas Davidson, New York: Prometheus; 329 pp.; $24.95.

During the 25 years of its existence, contemporary feminism has received a measure of gentle chiding for its excesses. Not even the most indulgent eye can completely overlook feminist comparisons of marriage to prostitution, childbirth to defecation, or the use of the pronoun "he" to Jim Crow. Yet few cultural critics have been willing to call feminism nonsense from top to bottom, misanthropic utopianism at its core as well as its periphery. To that small group add Nicholas Davidson.

Davidson gauges the "failure" of feminism along several dimensions, faulting it first as an explanatory theory. As he lucidly and accurately explains, feminism takes all of society to be the product of women's oppression. (The popular label for feminism was initially "women's lib," a clear expression of the demand for relief from male dominance.) This theory in turn obliges feminists to deny, as they do, any basic biological difference between the inclinations and aptitudes of the two sexes. This tenet is crucial. If the sexes occupy different social "roles" because, on the whole, they want to, these "roles" reflect the cumulative authentic choices of both men and women, not deception and coercion. Indeed, if sex differences are real, maintenance of a society without sex roles would require intrusive manipulation on a scale, in Davidson's words, "to make such totalitarian nightmares as *Brave New World* and *1984* look tolerant and humane by comparison."

Davidson's synopsis of the scientific literature, although derivative from previous surveys, suffices to refute what he aptly terms "cultural determinism." Prenatal exposure of the male brain to androgens is what produces the characteristic behavior of human males; genetic females accidentally exposed to androgens in utero also come to display "male" behavior. (Davidson does not mention complementary studies by Karow and Reinisch of androgen-insensitive fetal males who go on to display characteristically feminine behavior.) Also, as Davidson notes, ethology has dismantled the false dichotomy between learned behavior and innate reflexes; the innateness of general patterns of motivation and cognition is now a commonplace among evolutionary biologists.

Davidson blunts his argument a bit by straining to credit "feminist scientists" like Sarah Hrdy and Carol Gilligan with a degree of insight into male biases in science. Prof. Hrdy, for instance, accuses classical Darwinism of one-sidedly taking male adaptation alone as the engine of human evolution. This silly accusation, which Davidson accepts, simply illustrates the alertness of feminists to nonexistent slights. *Darwin himself* emphasized the interplay between male *and female* preferences for traits in the opposite sex as a determinant of evolution, an idea central to Fisher's work a generation

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later. (In *Feminism and Freedom* I examine Hrdy's theory of the supposed evolution of female competitiveness and promiscuity, especially its implicit treatment of the two sexes as competing groups.) The moral of Davidson's chivalrous lapse: where science is concerned, assume feminists are wrong about everything.

To be sure, feminists have now begun to assert, indeed insist, that women are less belligerent, less competitive—in a word, better—than men. This new emphasis is puzzling not only when used to support the same demands (comparable worth, affirmative action, curricular revolution) once made in the name of cultural determinism, but because it is allowed to coexist with the older denial of sex differences. Such inconsistency has its uses; since an inconsistent theory implies anything, as all logicians know, the inconsistent feminist theorist can help herself to any claim she needs at any point in any debate. That is why debating feminists is so like wrestling with Jell-O. Most people, of course, shun self-contradictions; what impels feminists to theirs, as Davidson sees it, is their inveterate, ungovernable hatred of men. They will say anything against men, whether or not it makes sense. When accusing men of oppressing women, feminists maintain the sameness of the sexes; when blaming men for war, pollution, and the rest of the human condition, they ridicule male brutality. Vagina you win, penis I lose. This "poisonous negativity" is for Davidson the second major failure of feminism and why, for all its claims, it has done nothing for the average woman but make her uneasy about her natural impulses.

To my mind, the deepest feature of *Failure* is precisely this capacity of Davidson's to cut through feminist (il)logic to the sensibility that produces it and the rhetorical devices that sustain it. One marvelous passage begins with a seemingly objective description of his apartment, with its dark wood moldings and its swinging kitchen door, and ends abruptly with "this apartment reflects an oppressive culture that subordinates women. Perhaps I should move out of it." Why? "The dark wood is intended to suggest the men-only atmosphere of turn-of-the-century clubs." As for that kitchen door, "Women must be vulnerable to masculine penetration." Anyone familiar with feminist prose will recognize the accuracy of this replica. Parody it is not, for parodies exaggerate. As Davidson summarizes the feminist perspective:

> Find something that bothers you, explore how it is caused, directly or indirectly, by tradition and by men, and you will have reproduced the structure common to all feminist analyses. If the cause is indirect, so much the better: you will win points for subtlety and thrill your readers with horror as you reveal to them the perversity of concealed influence.

Davidson is also very good on sex as practiced ("attempted" might be the better word) according to feminist imperatives.

Equally masterful is his analysis of the language of Kate Millett's *Sexual Politics*, a tour de force of textual dissection to prompt envy in the most sensitive literary critic.

> The evidence of Millett's hatred of men seethes just beneath the surface of *Sexual Politics*. . . . Regardless of one's views on Freud's theory of penis envy, it is evident that some such desire inflicts itself on Millett. There is a curious gingerish quality in her reference to the male genitals which seems to reflect not some remnant of prudery but rather an odd mixture of admiration, disgust, and fear, of fascination and repulsion. She is infinitely more concerned with the male genitals than any man I have ever known. Rather than using the many available matter-of-fact terms to refer to the male genitals, Millett gives them elaborate, sneering characterizations like "the male indicator" and "the penis, badge of the male's superior status."
>
> Millett claims that men distance themselves from women by depersonalizing them, by objectifying them. . . . It therefore comes as a shock to realize that such dehumanizing objectification is precisely what Millett does to men. This pervasive tendency is most strikingly seen in the habitual use of the generalized term "male" when a specific term like "husband" would be more appropriate, as in "All that the wife acquired by her labor, service or act during coverture became the legal property of the male." The effect of this repetitive misuse of the word "male" is, first, to remove the immediacy of the reader's perception of the human actor in question by depicting him primarily as a member of the impersonal category "males," second, by a process of guilt through association, to make the category of maleness suspect, and thus finally to make the word "male" into a term of abuse.
>
> To take another example: Millett states—and here one must emphatically agree with her—that "women entertain, please, gratify, satisfy and flatter men with their sexuality." It is a symptom of the web of negativity into which she is trying to draw her reader that by the end of her second chapter Millett expects this statement—which only describes what is natural, normal and good—to be met with shock. How outrageous, the reader is supposed to think, that women entertain, please, gratify and so forth, men! What an unjust culture it is that would make them want to do such a thing! Rationality recedes; rage builds.

(I suspect Davidson will be attacked for criticizing an "early" feminist like Millett, but he is right to do so; Millett's rancorous lesbianism may embarrass today's more urbane feminists, but they have never categorically rejected it.) Much else in *Failure* is equally knowing, pithy and memorable; I wish I could quote it all.

Davidson is unafraid to push beyond analysis to advocacy. He wants to disperse the cloud currently shadowing manhood. And when he urges a "re-

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validation of the masculine," he does not mean by "masculine" an inner security so great that it allows tenderness; he wants old-fashioned toughness. He believes decisiveness, aggressiveness, and the capacity for violence are as important as the nurturant values about which so much is being heard. It is a tribute to the level of intimidation achieved by feminists that Davidson's unapologetic embrace of manhood will probably shock the reader. "Does this mean that a man or a woman who exhibits less of some of these [stereotypical] characteristics is less of a man or a woman than one who exhibits more? Yes, it does. When we say 'What a woman!' or 'What a man!' that is exactly what we mean." Prose like this provides a long-forgotten thrill, like the aroma of steak after a regimen of tofu. Unfortunately, his eagerness to remind the reader of manhood occasionally tempts Davidson to overstatement. He argues that the masculine disposition to smash things must be preserved against the day when a comet threatens to collide with the Earth. If comet-busting is typical of the reasons male aggressiveness is needed, it may safely be allowed to vanish. It is surely enough to observe that those other guys over the hill are liable to vent their aggression on us, and for this reason we must keep our masculine powder dry.

We always like to think that foolish ideas have no power to persuade others presumably as rational as we. It would therefore be nice to be able to agree with Davidson that feminism has also failed as an influential social movement, but to do so would be self-indulgent. Davidson is certainly right that many social changes for which feminists claim credit (or take blame) were generated by larger social forces, particularly "the decreasing specialization in the basic spheres of human life" that permits everyone, women included, to try more things. However, neither the Geraldine Ferraro debacle in 1984 nor the failure of the Equal Rights Amendment, Davidson's principal concrete evidence that feminism is finished, warrant any such conclusion. The Democratic Party remains as powerful as it is pro-feminist. It currently controls both houses of Congress and may elect a President this year. Feminist organizations played a major role in blocking the appointment of Robert Bork to the Supreme Court. And while the ERA was never ratified, virtually everything it demanded is being secured by other means, chiefly litigation involving the 14th Amendment, Title IX, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, and other civil rights legislation. Davidson asserts, wholly incorrectly, that "By the mid-eighties, the idea of comparable worth was effectively dead among thoughtful Americans." In fact, hundreds of state and municipal governments have imposed comparable worth pay scales or have ordered comparable worth studies, the telltale prelude to legislative action. Astonishingly, Davidson makes only one small parenthetical reference to affirmative action for women, an idea very much alive and recently given full recognition by the Supreme Court. It is not easy to follow Davidson's assertion that "a consensus is emerging that feminism went too far" at a time when tens of millions of men are being discriminated against solely because feminist claims about past "sexism" and the need for "role models" have been institutionalized. Davidson's sweeping judgment that "the Feminist Era is over" is sheer wishful thinking.

At such junctures Davidson has fallen victim to the vices of his virtues. The autonomy of mind which allows him to praise masculinity when, all around him, men are losing theirs also weakens his sensitivity to external stimuli. In much the same way, Davidson's fluency leads him, often enough, to fustian. There are whole paragraphs consisting solely of rhetorical sentences. The book as a whole is rather amorphous in overall design, with digressions of dubious relevance, and is extremely repetitious. Davidson makes virtually all his points in the first half of *Failure*; some of the later chapters read almost like revised versions of earlier ones.

These lapses, however, do not diminish the value of Davidson's book. He has not only looked upon the Gorgon and returned, he has brought back a vivid description of the creature.

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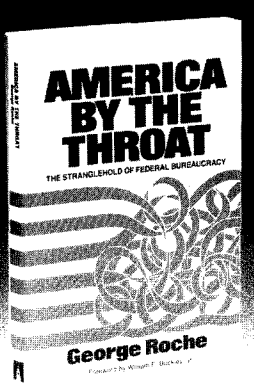

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Art as Politics: Rebecca West's Unpleasant Mirror *by Ana Selic*

"All that is necessary for the triumph of evil is that good men do nothing."

—Edmund Burke

***Rebecca West: A Life* by Victoria Glendenning, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.**

There is a photograph of Rebecca West taken shortly before her death: she sits in a throne-like armchair looking slightly off camera. One of her hands rests on the carved handle, the other is in her lap. Her hair is respectably gray and her necklace and her rings, without any doubt, come from the right store. She has everything: money, self-confidence, knowledge.

It is her answer to the hate-mail she has been receiving all her life and for having started out as Cicely Fairfield, unsuccessful actress, London's instant literary celebrity, and unwed mother. In 1983 she died at the age of 90, a Dame of the British Empire, after lighting the age with her intelligence and vivacity.

Her newest official biographer, Victoria Glendenning, attempts to defend West as a frail human being who needs our understanding. If Dame Rebecca tried to achieve, through Mrs. Glendenning, what she had often been accused of wanting while still alive—"a good posthumous press"—the result is not a complete victory for the defense.

By choosing to follow the middle road between her respect for both Rebecca West and her accusers, the alleged defender has unwittingly joined the side of those who saw in the British author, dead as well as alive, a threat to their cherished notions, nourished vanities, and vested interests.

As West herself once wrote, "as in the case of divine revelation, and also in case of tea-leaf reading, there is no concern here [in biographies] with sheer brute evidence." Victoria Glendenning quotes this statement only to forget it. Instead, in her account of West's rise in the intellectual and social circles, she emphasizes the rise itself as a social phenomenon. Glendenning furnishes an exhaustive list of Rebecca West's ancestors (not forgetting possible royal connections); she gives us detailed descriptions of her various habitations, furniture, French paintings, number and type of wine bottles in her cellar; we are titillated with a chart of West's love affairs, including an explanation of why her most famous lover, H.G. Wells, failed to take "usual precautions" and made her pregnant during their second encounter. We read of a spat between West and Virginia Woolf, and a spirited defense of West's love for too much lobster and too many hats.

The reviewers have sopped all this up, each vying to add to the treasury of "facts." The public was informed of the occasion when West was taken raving from the "Ritz" by her husband and a waiter; the uncontrollable temper, it was insinuated, was not reserved only for her personal life: it tainted all her achievements, while her fiction was nothing but a constant rewriting of her early life.

Rebecca West's detractors came out swinging: *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, which brought her fame, is only an "artless exercise in self-indulgence" crowded with confusing statements and twisted reality (Rebecca West continued aiding Serbs well after Winston Churchill handed their homeland to Tito); she was accused of being a "paranoid anti-Communist" (during the heyday of Burgess, McLean, Blunt, and others) who was as obsessive

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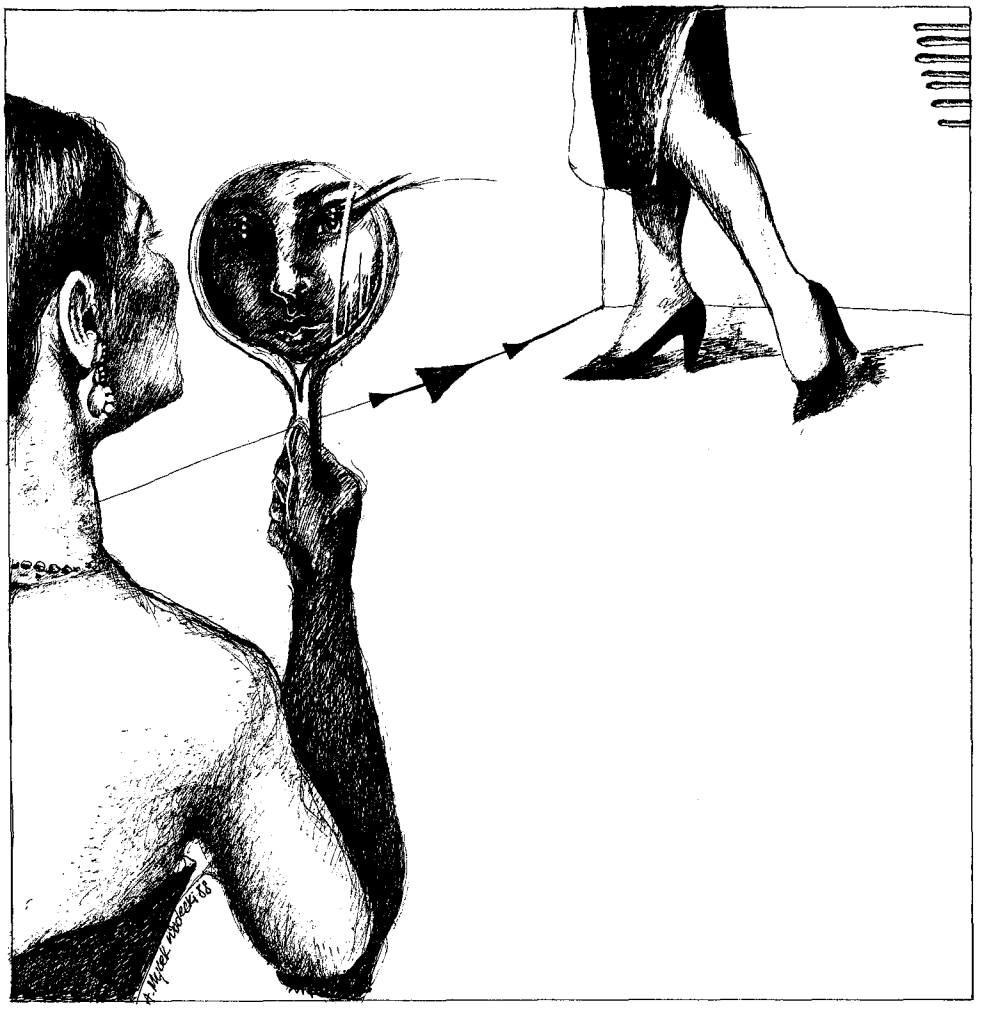

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in her black-and-white view of the world as she was in her personal relationships.

In West's postmortem, reality and truth have as much weight as any other opinion, and she has been dragged over the coals by all and sundry, even by her only son, who had noted cynically that his mother thought "life could be improved by editing." (For a neglected child, Anthony West had little rancor for his father, H.G. Wells, who conveniently stayed away from him all his life.)

Though she was equally celebrated for her fiction, that part of her oeuvre is of less importance. Her novels are uneven and not so much works of art as explorations of an art form. Her first novel, *The Judge*, leaves the reader wondering whether the exotic atmosphere and anatomic treatment of characters are a coincidence, a fad, or an attempt by a young artist to develop a recognizable hand. In her best fiction, *The Fountain Overflows* trilogy (in a way foreshadowing Ayn Rand), a family's story comes alive, but West is definitely not at her best in fiction: she is much stronger than any of her characters. She attains her true stature by combining the assumed, the glimpsed, or the desired with the real —as in her best work, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*—confusing most critics along the way.

An imaginative journey through the mountains and the valleys of the Balkans, with ruminations upon Bogomil sanctuaries and Roman ruins, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon* is full of unforgettable people—a nameless Montenegrin woman near an incredibly blue river, distraught over her wasted life, trying to make sense of it; the young soldiers guarding a military cemetery on the Kaymakchalan, afraid of the dead soldiers calling for their mothers; an officer grieving beyond human (Western) limits on a hilltop above Sarajevo (while at the same time maintaining his composure for the sake of his uniform)—who were also seen by many critics as chance destinies of nameless beings, entirely divorced from our common condition.

To people in the Balkans, the exotic places West mentions are the familiar countryside in which they lead their everyday lives. By elevating what she saw to a higher level of myth, she sketched a parable of life beset by the forces of evil.

For feminists, leftists, and others it was easiest to identify this work as a sort of science-fiction travelogue—with its irrelevant images of snow burying Croatia in April, covering the fields and the road leading the author and her companions to a disastrous dinner. West's tale of how a Hungarian king and his queen found refuge from Asiatic hordes on an Adriatic Island, and were saved only by several feet of sea-channel and the news of the Great Khan's death, has, naturally, no bearing upon anything we know. Removed in space as in time, nothing, of course, is relevant, because nothing is coded, and the *clef* fails.

Rebecca West's Manichean world of ultimate evil arraigned against blemishless virtue, brilliant as it is unbearable, is her only tool. But the evil is not to blame for being true to itself; the sacrifice of a black lamb on the Sheep's Field in Macedonia by nominal followers of a monotheistic religion is for her a stark illustration of what "good" people are doing all the time, to save themselves. West's sickening description of the sacrificial stone, slimy with the blood of butchered sheep, with barefooted Moslem dervishes (probably good men all) extolling their acts of Molochian faith, came out in 1941, at a time when the Yugoslavs joined Poles and Czechs as victims sacrificed to appease the powers of destruction. (All of it as if happening on another planet, at a mythical time—the rite of mollifying the "idiotic god.") In our minds, West says, we have distilled the Choice into the impossible alternative of being either the victims or the butchers.

Every August, thousands of peaceniks paint themselves black and gray and prostrate themselves on the streets of major Western cities, eager to die in innocence. They, wrote West, probably see themselves as noble as Serbian Prince Lazar, who chose to die on the battlefield of Kosovo, in 1389, rather than live, in anything else than beatitude. The Poem of the Grey Falcon, which Dame West quotes in its crucial part, sings of Prophet Elijah disguised as the gray falcon, coming down to Prince Lazar, on the eve of the Serbian defeat with the offer of a choice between the heavenly and the earthly kingdom. The Turks, sings the falcon, will lose if Lazar chooses to live and win, but the Serbian kingdom will be only temporal, earthly, mortal, and virtueless . . . On the other hand, a defeat will transform the Serbs into a heavenly host, alive forever, to defend what is worth defending . . . Few foreigners have ever felt the Serbian "epic of defeat" as Rebecca West; few have spurned it as vehemently as she, with greater love for the living, real, flawed Serbs.

It is said among the Serbs that Prince Lazar lost his battle because of another famous Balkan ingredient—treason. Wanting either to settle a score or hoping to gain from the overall defeat of his race, Lazar's vassal Vuk Brankovic arrived conveniently late to commit his forces in the decisive Battle of Kosovo.

But Rebecca West didn't have to go back to the mythical Balkan world, in search for answers. In the post-World War II years the examples of treason were many and the need for response, in her view, more than urgent.

"Once a traitor comes to court, or under the notice of Parliament," she wrote, "all that should interest the lawyers or the ministers concerned is whether he has been exercising his profession or not and who has been helping him. If inquiry is made into his politics and his morality much will be said, probably untrue, which will divert attention of the community from the real threat by the new traitor."

In the Western societies' refusal to deal with the fact and the meaning of treason, the case of William Jones, "Lord Haw-Haw" (covered in West's book *The Meaning of Treason*), was a significant event: "Haw-Haw" was the last Western traitor sentenced to death (in 1946, for collaboration with the Nazis). At that time, no one but a few lonely voices protested against his punishment. The cases of such postwar spies, as Alan May Nunn, the Rosenbergs, Klaus Fuchs, Burgess and McLean proved, however, much different. The Western public saw the new breed of traitors not for what they were, but as refugees from "the vulgar district in the world of fancy." After the images of the war started fading, the hunger for heroes had to be sated by what was at hand, and it was André Gide who wrote, "To me a worst instinct has always seemed sincere."

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Simple, straightforward heroism was made to seem *passé*. As West put it, simple heroism has something "dawdy about it, while treason has certain style, a sort of elegance, or, as the vulgar say, 'sophistication.'" In this inverted world, West went on to say, "people who practice the virtues are judged as if they have struck the sort of a false attitude which betrays the incapacity for art, while the people who practice vices are judged as if they have shown the subtle rightness of gesture which is the sign of a born artist."

This cynical inversion of values is what constitutes the ruling morality of the "Eastern Bloc," which, like any lethal disease, refuses to be contained by frontiers and geographic barriers. Though lacking the firsthand experience of someone who has lived in the Communist East, Rebecca West managed to detect its echoes in her own world, and she tried to fight it, giving it the proper name it deserved.

Speaking in conclusion not of the traitors' but of our own morality, Rebecca West does not propose a police state which could handle the threat much better than the weak democracies. She places her hope upon the human species—on our ability for "tightrope walking."

West had more than her share of flaws, but her personal and artistic failings are only used as convenient weapons by critics who cannot say that they really hate her for her virtues. The more distant in time our writers are, the better off we, their readers. Very few among us know and care that Giacomo Leopardi was a hunchback who hardly ever left his study, or that Dante Alighieri switched his political allegiance almost daily. Or that, besides having at least two illegitimate children, Francesco Petrarca, the master of the verses of pure love, returned to Christianity at the end of his life, just in case there was a God. Or that Oscar Wilde lived scandalously, though he wrote like an angel. Or that Dostoevski was a profligate and a gambler. Instead of denying the great their claim to greatness for not being the purest among the pure, it would be more just for us to say they were often great despite themselves. Few of them deserve praise for what they did, and even fewer for what they were.

And though we do not have to rediscover who Rebecca West was, we certainly cannot fail, in her case, to rediscover how often art becomes confused with politics. It is not only because artists themselves cannot refrain from meddling in worldly affairs; it is because they quite often have to surround themselves with followers and defenders, if they are to survive.

"*Sanza avere armi proprie nessun principe è securo*," as Niccolò Machiavelli observed centuries ago. He himself was unjustly accused of ruthlessness and amorality in the centuries to come, for having honestly explored what the rulers of his (and other) times had to be and do to rule, without pretending they were just like the "friendly folks next door." Machiavelli, however, should have directed his advice at writers, too. As for Dame Rebecca West, she, like the world she stood for, has yet to find the right defenders, somewhat more aware of what they are defending, and why.

Decency Through Strength *by Clyde Wilson*

"Ideas rule the world and its events. A revolution is a passage of an idea from theory to practice. Whatever men say, material interests never have caused and never will cause a revolution."

—Mazzini

***Right From the Beginning* by Patrick J. Buchanan, Boston and Toronto: Little, Brown; $18.95.**

My grandmother, the daughter of a Confederate "high private," always said that if someone had done something particularly good, you could be sure he had Southern ancestry somewhere. I first heard this during the latter days of World War II in connection with General Patton, who at that time, with the help of a couple of uncles, was spectacularly chasing the Hun across his own territory.

Like everything else my grandmother told me, this has nearly always proved to be true. Therefore, I was not surprised to learn from Pat Buchanan's memoirs that he—the favorite TV personality at our house—was descended from the Buchanans and Baldwins of Mississippi. In *Right From the Beginning*, Buchanan has given us a lively and good-spirited account of his background and early career, up to the time he went to work for Richard Nixon in 1966, describing by the way how he was on the "right from the beginning."

Pat Buchanan is not ashamed of these Southern origins and knows that he owes something to them (would that a few more of his tepid fellow conservatives had the same Southern "Celtic" spirit), yet the predominant, immediate force in his background was the confident and principled Irish Catholicism of the post-World War II era. One of nine children of an upper-middle-class Catholic family, Buchanan grew up in what was then the sleepy, decent Southern town of Washington (the one our forefathers called "the federal district"), a town which has now disappeared beneath the weight of the cosmopolitan capital of the flabbiest empire in world history.

His education was entirely Catholic (except for one year at the Columbia Journalism School), academically and morally religious, and reinforced by a robustly healthy and uncomplicated family life in which tradition, faith, common sense, and patriotism were reflexive values. To this he attributes his ability to cut through the multiplying webs of cant and pseudo-

Clyde Wilson is planning to devote the second Tuesday in November to his compost heap.

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sophistication that tie down modern public discourse and to rely upon fundamental principles in his columns, speeches, and television appearances. For this we should be eternally grateful. Buchanan tells us that while serving in the White House he ghostwrote Nixon's "Silent Majority" speech and Vice President Agnew's famous illumination of the sinister power of the media. These, so far, were certainly the high points of American rhetoric in the second half of the 20th century, though they have as yet borne no fruit in policy.

Buchanan gives us occasional tidbits like these from his years seated near the mighty. His recollection of his first two meetings with Nixon, for instance, should be of interest to every future student of that phenomenon. However, those who hope for a political insider's memoirs of 20 years (on and off) in the Nixon and Reagan White House—including the explosions of Watergate and Iran-Contra—will be disappointed by *Right From the Beginning*. That, Buchanan tells us, is for the next book. This is not a politician's show-and-tell but a conservative's *Bildungsroman*.

He does give us two concluding chapters of political prescription for the future, beginning with an account of his brief presidential precampaign in 1987, humorously entitled "Is That Churchill Under the Bed?" Buchanan withdrew, he tells us, because he could not hope to win and would only have detracted from the strength of Kemp and Robertson. Those words were written before Pat Buchanan's beloved conservative movement was left with a choice between a Rockefeller Republican and a Ford Republican (both, as he comments in another context, cowboys who are all hat and no cattle).

I wonder if he thinks differently now? What might a principled and hard-hitting conservative candidacy have done to transform the campaign into something from which some hope or value might have been salvaged? Buchanan, it is true, has no political base in the traditional sense. He has made his career in the media, and as an appointed official in the executive branch. He does not come, except spiritually (which is after all the most important way), from the grassroots. It is amazing how old-fashioned and

backward our political party system is. Our society is now almost totally centralized and consolidated in every sphere, and it is nearly impossible to rise or to have any influence unless you begin near the top, whether in business, professions, culture, or communications. Only in the instance of the political parties (and organized crime) does one still have to begin near the ward-heeler level to build a "base."

Without such a political base, Pat Buchanan was justified in his hesitation. On the other hand, as he clearly recognizes, the key to political leadership today is communication. Buchanan is certainly able to communicate, not because of some magic articulateness, but because he has something honest and deeply felt to say (like Ronald Reagan before he began to sound like Ike or Gerald Ford).

He is probably the only person in sight who could really carry out his prescription for the next Republican President: to accept the need for a continuing principled confrontation with the media and their Democratic allies. We do not know if this will work because it has never been tried with perseverance. Why is it that whenever it has been tried and seemed to work it was hastily abandoned for a policy of "go along and get along"? That—the avoidance of principle except on the hard left—is, I suppose, a part of the much-touted "genius of American politics."

These are my conclusions, not Pat Buchanan's, but he ought to agree with them. He is loyal to his former bosses, Nixon and Reagan, a loyalty quite old-fashioned and commendable under the circumstances. I would not have it any other way. But it takes only a little reading between the lines to cull out of *Right From the Beginning* an indictment of stupendous and tragic failures of principle by these flawed leaders, despite protestations to the contrary.

Our era is not like the 50's, he observes, rightly. "Our political and social quarrels now partake of the savagery of religious wars because, at bottom, *they are religious wars*. The

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most divisive issues of American politics are now about our warring concepts of right and wrong, good and evil. In a way the Kerner Commission never predicted, we have indeed become 'two nations.'" Not much headway will be made, Buchanan implies, until we accept that. But, alas, it seems as if the whole history of American politics is made up of the avoidance of issues, not their confrontation.

If he ever had any future aspirations to elective office, he probably abandoned them with this book. *Right From the Beginning* is personally frank. Not only frank about youthful admiration for Joe McCarthy and Goldwater but frank about his own hell-raising youth and young manhood. Frank, but not graphic: ladies are referred to respectfully and mostly only by first names. I am nearly of Pat Buchanan's age, and I find his hell-raising youth familiar and refreshing. Those of us who grew up through the 50's and early 60's can remember when hell-raising was exuberantly barbaric and enjoyable, but not mean-spirited and decadent. Those days left a lot to be desired, but we are justifiably nostalgic comparing them with the pall that began to descend on American life when Kennedy and his "best and brightest" took over, shortly followed by the blossoming of drugs, promiscuity, and perversion. My chief regret is that my hell-raising career did not last as many years as apparently did Buchanan's.

This is not a great memoir, but an interesting one that does succeed in invoking, vividly and memorably, a real segment of American life in the 50's and 60's. It ought to be enjoyed by those who had similar experiences and to have a minor but secure place as a historical document. We all know a great deal more than we need to about the heroic youth of that era and their noble struggle for civil rights, peace, freedom, snottiness, drugs, degeneracy, terrorism, and treason. It is good to have on record some account of those who were young in that day and on the other side of the barricades.

Pat Buchanan suggests that the young conservatives of the period can be understood in terms of the aftermath of World War II. I think he is right and would carry the observation even further. How we split in the 60's depended upon which war we inherited. If our people were in the trenches (figuratively speaking) in order to make the world safe for decency, we became "conservatives." Those from Washington bureaus who saw the war as a great social welfare project—to make the world safe for Eleanor Roosevelt and Uncle Joe—begat the radicals of the 60's. James Gould Cozzens foresaw it all in *Guard of Honor*. The same fault line decided Vietnam and will dictate the loss of Central America. There are too many Americans in high places who cannot accept an effective, reasonably decent, anti-Communist regime. They have to have an imaginary and impossible "democracy" in places where it never has nor ever will exist.

Perhaps *Right From the Beginning* was originally to be a campaign autobiography. If so, it evolved a great deal. It ends where such a biography would begin, with Buchanan at 28, about to start his career as a draftsman for the mighty. His last two chapters, however, appear to be a campaign platform, full of worthwhile plans for specific action.

He is, however, neither shallow nor optimistic enough for the hustings. He begins with T.S. Eliot's observation, almost a half century ago now, that democracy is not enough. Democracy is fine and necessary (and the only possible arrangement for Americans, Mr. Buchanan adds), but it is only a method—it does not have enough content to sustain us. "If you will not have God (and He is a jealous God)," said Eliot, "you should pay your respects to Hitler and Stalin."

"The hard truth," glosses Buchanan, "with which conservatives must come to terms is that the resolution of America's social crisis may be beyond the realm of politics and government, in a democratic society." "Democracy really has no answer to decadence. . . ." "Naiveté is not our problem; the West's problem is willful self-delusion. The reason that we do not learn from history is that we do not wish to learn from history." No faithful reader of *Chronicles* will disagree.

Nevertheless, the government must do what it can. Buchanan proposes a 10-plank platform, which is as much populist as Republican, and therefore will never be adopted by any party politician. Aside from the balanced budget, much of it has to do with repairing the havoc wrought by the Supreme Court in the issues of unborn life, religion, reverse discrimination, and the like. The only social concern omitted is immigration. Yet Pat Buchanan should know that there is no point in getting tough with the Chinese government while they are busy *colonizing our country*.

Buchanan is ready to go for national initiative and referendum, repeal of the two-term amendment, and limited terms for federal judges including the Supreme Court. The standpat conservatives will be shocked by his willingness to push this program through a new constitutional convention. This goes against the accepted wisdom, but as Buchanan points out, all proposed amendments would have to be approved by three fourths of the states—as good a guarantee as we could hope for. I agree. Constitutionally speaking, we could not be any worse off than we are. The work of our Founding Fathers cannot be endangered by a Constitutional Convention. It has already been destroyed. Such a convention might work, especially if there were a concerted effort to elect decent citizens to it and to ratifying conventions—people who had not been previously corrupted by public office.

All in all, Pat Buchanan's ideas would have made a great agenda for a Reagan administration in 1981—if there had ever been one.

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Stardust *by Dabney Stuart*

"Not till the fire is dying in the grate/
Look we for any kinship with the stars."
—Meredith

***Source* by Fred Chappell, Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press.**

The post-World War I shattered visions of Pound and Eliot are perhaps fundamentally less different from the incoherencies of Kerouac and Corso, the randomly referential allegory of Ashbery, or the associative anarchy of Bly and Merwin than we have been taught. Our century seems more whole the more of it we have to look on; one of its clearest characteristics is its overwhelmingly disconnected diversity. Yeats's "things fall apart" has become the mellowest of understatements.

In the context of such disorganization, Fred Chappell's seventh volume of poetry becomes illuminating. At first reading *Source* seems to participate, both in its overall structure and in particular poems, in this chaos. Nothing, it turns out, could be farther from the truth.

The center of the volume is "Latencies." It begins with an apparently straightforward explanation of the speaker's book-derived understanding of the idea of *latency*. But the image suggesting the idea keys rich evocations:

> the stars
> come out, bright fishnet lifting
> from darkness
> those broken
> many heroes we read the mind
> with.

The motif of human curiosity interacting with itself as source and with the external world returns at the end to those scattered stars through a modern image which echoes "heroes" dreadfully:

> Or consider the young man
> fishing the river. Now he
> has gone to be a soldier, he
> has become
> a latent garden of terrible
> American beauty roses
> which only the enemy bullets
> can make manifest.

We can move from this poem to almost any other in the book, as spokes from a hub. Most obvious, perhaps, is a lieder cycle spoken by a Vietnam veteran who has difficulty returning to his life as a sculptor—his experiences in the war grate mercilessly against the classical, polished precedents of his art.

> I reach into the crumbled
> centuries and draw forth
> cherubs,
> Nymphs, and pediments, which
> do not overpower
> The chopper's throaty throb
> and the bamboo
> Straining back away and the
> white grass warped down
> Where the stretcher-bearers
> trotted stooped.

The sequence flirts with Matthew Arnold's resolution to "Dover Beach," but, resisting the temptation to be content with "your slim white hands [smoothing] my thigh," concludes:

> I have imagined the stars in
> clean white rows.
> That was strict insanity. Now
> they commingle with flesh
> And shadow and stone and
> breath, a nebula
> Of accident I thrust my hands
> into until it vanishes.

The shift to the galactic swirl as a medium for the sculptor is concentric with the stellar dispersal of "Latencies." This time, however, we have a real broken hero.

The 11 poems grouped immediately after "Latencies" are myths and fables which offer another key to the theoretical underpinnings of *Source*'s form. The self-sufficiency of these poems, belied by their brevity, indicates that myth, legend, and folktale are not so much forms we perceive our experience in, but actively ideal forms that determine the shape and nature of our experiences. It's also possible that these ideal forms are fragments of a larger, ineffable design. One is reminded of Andrew Lang's idea that the story was originally a monolith that broke apart into all the particular stories we live and tell, the Big Bang theory recapitulated in sensibility.

Which brings us back to "Latencies" again, and its image of stars as broken heroes. The entire opening poem, for instance, occurs in a fog in which solid objects "dissolve into spirit." In "Nocturne" stars are "powder," frost "emery." The Queen Anne's lace in "Here" is presented as a pointillist might see it. Clouds, snow, dust also recur as aspects of the air these poems breathe. This is no more accidental than it is "Nature" poetry. It is rather the rehearsal of the book's desire to embody our shattered present and to suggest its source.

"Urlied," one of the final poems in the book, removes the guesswork inherent in Chappell's undertaking. It gives a philosophical and scientific base for what underlies the poetry. Lucretius speaks roughly three fifths of the poem; Chappell bases his speeches squarely in *De Rerum Natura*, echoing Lucretius' ironic rejection (in a poem) of poetry and religion as perpetuators of fear and illusion. By making Lucretius' statements anachronistic, Chappell wants the social and political upheaval of Lucretius' time and ours compared. Rilke and Olympus become contemporary, equally detestable in their romantic divergence from the truth. Lucretius' particular truth is that we are composed of irreducible, impervious particles and of the void in which they randomly move, things in the universe being accidental arrangements of these two elements. Space is endless and the movement of particles through it eternal. Human death means merely a redistribution of the particles. Chappell has Lucretius say "The comfort is, there's nothing personal in it," and evaluates Lucretius' poem as the bravest of acts:

> *Lucretius has walked out far to*
> *view the Gorgon*

Dabney Stuart is author of Don't Look Back *(LSU Press).*

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Terror. Returned to shape
His thoughts and suffer the
windburn histories
Of city and animal and star.
His hand is pure and alone.

Lucretius, however, is not revitalized by his daring, for the poem ends "We saw you in the white fountain of delirium / Burning but not purified."

The other extreme of the terrestrial specks pointed out earlier are those in intergalactic space, the "nebula of accident" into which the [broken] sculptor thrusts his displaced hands, the stars in "Latencies," the "mealy light" which may be "the afterglow of the giant / death of some far legendary sun" ("Windows"). For Lucretius such images would refer to the cold dispersal of matter; Chappell, however, suggests discovery and hope in his resolution of those clusters. In "Message," after moving from terror to sorrow, his "man" finds everything changed in the hour of his most destructive grief:

He ascends
a finer dimension of event, he
feels with senses
newly evolved the wide
horizons unknown till now.
He is transformed head to foot,
taproot to polestar.
He breathes a new universe,
the blinding whirlpool
galaxies drift round him and
begin to converse.

Finally, the "Forever Mountains" pictures the poet's father ascending a mountain (suggestively named "Pisgah") which "possesses him." He builds a fire at twilight and "in the night a granary of stars / Rises in the water and spreads from edge to edge." In the morning he, too, "rises glad and early and goes his way." The poet's

vision blurs with distance.
I see no more.
Forever Mountain has become
a cloud
That light turns gold, that wind
dislimns.

The groundwork Chappell has laid with shattered matter, with myth and fable, with the anachronistic perspective of Lucretius, prepares us for the apotheoses—what appears as death is potentially transformation. Each character remains elementally what he is, his components dispersed into new configurations. The father's ascent of Pisgah suggests, too, that the process may not be as impersonal as Lucretius thought.

In *Source* Fred Chappell renders his atomic vision visible at two extremes ("taproot to polestar") between which the human species carries out its being, its daily heroism, its sweet music, its longing for rest. We can also choose, the alternatives imply, how we wish to join the eternal smithereens. "Message" and "Forever Mountain" suggest the desirable ways, preferable to "making it new" with erudite pastiche, or to assembling nostalgic fragments to shore us against ruin. Rats' alley is not necessarily the King's High Way.

The Genuine Article

by Jane Greer

***Going Over East: Reflections of a Woman Rancher* by Linda M. Hasselstrom, Golden, CO: Fulcrum, Inc.; $13.95.**

Linda Hasselstrom is a friend of mine, although we don't write often or know each other well. I visited her South Dakota ranch, between the Black Hills and the Badlands, only once, six years ago, at which time I had the unwitting bad manners to ask her how much land she owned. It was an adventure I'll always remember warmly, and reading this book was like sitting at Linda's kitchen table and drinking coffee from her Thermos. The winner of Fulcrum's first American Writing Award, *Going Over East* is an easy ride, the best thing yet from this old pro. It's quintessential Hasselstrom (pronounced HAY'-selstrum)—forthright and serious, with just enough humor, tenderness, and gall to keep it as interesting as she is.

The qualifier "woman" in the book's subtitle is redundant: the book is not a "woman's book" nor is it about a "woman rancher" in any but the most technical sense. Hasselstrom is simply a rancher—and a petite, fine-boned one at that. Not born to *ranching*—she was adopted by her mother's new husband, a rancher, when she was nine—she was nonetheless born to *ranch*. After college and grad school, she returned home to work the place with her adoptive father and, later, with her husband. Had there been no father to return home to, and no terrific man to fall in love with and marry, I am convinced that she would be there nonetheless in the mud and heat and cold, pulling bloody calves, building her own house, fixing her own machinery, learning to use her word processor in her spare time. This woman is the genuine article.

For those city-dwellers who like to eat junk food, who waste water and fuel and rhapsodize about the romance of the West, she has undisguised contempt. "Broad generalities and shallow theories confuse and anger me," she writes. "Reality hinges on practicality, on knowledge that has daily use. Many people here dehorn and castrate calves just before or after the new moon to cut down on bleeding, butcher during the first three days after the full moon for tender meat, harvest and kill weeds when the moon is old, in its third or fourth quarter. This is reality, the real West—sturdily defying the shallow theories dreamed up by metropolitan thinkers in high-rises, people whose well-shod feet and clean hands never touch earth or blood."

Apparently, she doesn't think much of any life-style but her own. While she makes me want to defend mine, aspects of which are indefensible, it's a relief to have someone like *her*, for once, give the rest of us a swift kick. We're all used to being criticized—or worse, patronized—by idiots: the peaceniks and feminists and "educators" of the world. An idiot is the antithesis of what Linda Hasselstrom is. She knows what she's seen. City folk can't be trusted not to trespass on her land, shoot her cows for sport, and leave her gates open. Government and big business? The less said about them, the better. What matters is taking care of your own people, land, livestock, neighbors. And working hard at *something*, and frugality, appreciating what you've been given. All the rest is garden fertilizer.

Had you noticed that all the good writing with what English teachers and book reviewers call a "sense of place" came from Southern writers—and that most of them are dead? Think again. This woman is so hard in love

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with the mean place in which she lives that she's *compelled* to write about it, explicitly and with great care, and the writing is compelling as a result. It's as simple as that, and there ought to be a law against writing a book any other way. Readers will smell the mud and dung, drink the spring water Hasselstrom drinks, fight fire with her, sit on her porch after an endless, scorching, grimy day, and eat her cool sandwiches and salad. There are few subtleties here, as, I suspect, there are few in the woman. There's just too much to be done.

Jane Greer is a contributing editor to Chronicles *and editor of* Plains Poetry Journal.

Recovering the Medieval Family

by Bryce Christensen

***Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages* by Frances and Joseph Gies, New York: Harper & Row; $22.50.**

Hatred of the past ill becomes a historian. Yet it is hard not to detect this disfiguring animus—paired with an overweening love of contemporaneity—in the works of many modern historians of family life. In recent decades, men such as Philippe Aries, Edward Shorter, and Lloyd DeMause have alleged—on the basis of scanty evidence—that in premodern Europe, marriage was strictly an economic arrangement devoid of affection and that parents were usually cold, indifferent, or even cruel to their children. After looking at medieval infant mortality rates, Aries reasoned that "people could not allow themselves to become too attached to something that was regarded as a probable loss." Shorter averred that "maternal indifference to infants characterized traditional society" and that "good mothering is an invention of modernization." DeMause goes even further: "The history of childhood is a nightmare from which we have only recently begun to awaken. The farther back in history one goes, the lower the level of child care and the more likely children are to be killed, abandoned, beaten, terrorized, and sexually abused."

Fortunately, truth will out. *Marriage and the Family in the Middle Ages* is the latest in a series of scholarly investigations exposing Aries *et al.* as defenders of yet another of modernity's self-congratulatory myths. The Gieses' volume, in fact, comes hard on the heels of a valuable 1986 study on family life in colonial New England by John Demos, in which DeMause's views on child abuse were thoroughly exploded (*Past, Present, and Personal: The Family and the Life Course in American History*, Oxford University Press). Finding it virtually unknown in 17th-century Massachusetts, Demos contends that child abuse is a distinctively *modern* phenomenon, caused by the rootlessness and alienation of 20th-century life by the decline of "the 'providential' world-view of our forebears."

Medieval sources similarly contradict the Aries school of family historiography. In this new volume, a distinguished pair of medievalists, Frances and Joseph Gies, explore and discard "the hypothesis . . . that medieval families led impoverished emotional lives." The Gieses found that although children in early Europe did have to endure "a harsh environment with high mortality . . . severe discipline, and early consignment to work," their family life was "by no means bereft of parental concern and affection, or a 'concept of childhood.'" Documentary evidence for the emotional life of medieval lower classes is rare, but Church penitentials, gravestone inscriptions, and royal correspondence all provide abundant confirmation of Cicero's declaration that "nature implants in man above all a strong and tender love for his children." A bishop during the sixth century, Gregory of Tours expressed the prevailing attitude when he lamented the effects of an epidemic: "So we lost our little ones, who were so dear to us and sweet, whom we cherished in our bosoms and dandled in our arms, whom we had fed and nurtured with such loving care." The Gieses conclude that parents during the Middle Ages "felt toward children the same mixture of tenderness, amusement, and wonder that they feel today." In sum, the evidence is clear: "Children were valued and well treated" long before anyone supposed otherwise.

Nor were medieval marriages the loveless arrangements that some modern historians have postulated. Economics did heavily influence matchmaking during the era, but the latest research suggests that "amid dowries and dowers, morning gifts and jointures . . . affection, romance, and even passion managed to flourish." "Send for me," wrote a typical medieval English lady to her lord, "for I think it long since I lay in your arms."

Besides showing that warmth and love are not modern additions to family life, this painstakingly researched volume traces the family's gradual loss of earlier functions as the Church, state, and marketplace assumed greater prominence. In the early Middle Ages, the family and the "supra-family" (the Roman *gens* or the Germanic *Sippe*), exercised nearly absolute authority over members through regulation of worship, marriage, punishment, and inheritance. Even as late as the 15th century, the extended kinship group remained vitally important in mercantile Italy, while family lineage retained critical importance in France and England. Despite the greater importance of extended kinship during the Middle Ages, however, it would be a mistake to consider the nuclear family—father, mother, and children—an aberration peculiar to modern life. Although the people of the Middle Ages often regarded a larger family unit as ideal, high mortality rates and economic pressures combined to insure "the prevalence of the conjugal family (married couple, or parents and children)." By the end of the Middle Ages, this conjugal family "dominated the social landscape at all levels."

Curiously, while religion is generally counted as a defender of the family in the modern world, its effects upon the medieval family were ambiguous. On the other hand, the medieval Church did stress the sanctity of marriage while deploring the evils of divorce and concubinage. Yet on the other hand, the insistence upon priestly celibacy often led to a doctrinal bias against marriage, with one standard commentary using the parable of the sower (see Luke 8) to set the value of virginity at 100, widowhood at 60, and marriage at only 30. Further, the Church's impossible

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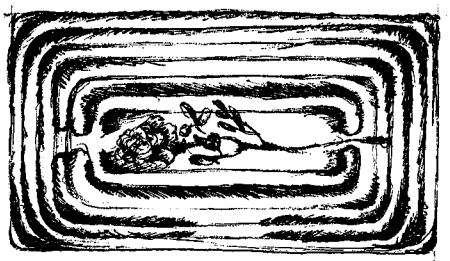
eighth-century definition of incest (finally abandoned in the 13th century) outlawed marriage even between those "spiritually related" through godparents and between very distant blood relatives who shared a great-great-grandfather. Greedy clergymen also weakened the family through their frequent practice of promising salvation to dying fathers who would will their possessions to the Church, thus impoverishing their heirs. Understandably, Martin Luther took the defense of marriage and the family as one of his key themes when he launched the Protestant Reformation at the close of the medieval era.



Today, though, a deep crisis in family life confronts both Protestant and Catholic religious leaders (as well as Jews and Mormons). The Gieses indeed concede that medieval changes in family and marriage appear slight compared to "the changes that have shaped and shaken them since." Divorce rates have skyrocketed in our century, while marriage and birthrates have declined to perilously low levels. More than 40 years ago, Harvard sociologist Pitirim Sorokin extrapolated current trends to predict a progressive degeneration of American domestic life, "until the family becomes a mere incidental cohabitation of male and female while the home will become a mere overnight parking place." The consequences he foresaw were "suicide, mental disease, and crime. . . . Weariness will spread over larger and larger numbers of the population." Only a spiritual renewal effected by "new Saint Pauls, Saint Augustines, and great religious and ethical leaders" could defeat the forces undermining the family. At least until the spiritual renascence that Sorokin hoped for occurs, praise for the superiority of contemporary family life will serve only to hide our predicament.

Bryce Christensen is editor of The Family in America.

Sexual Habits

by Thomas Fleming

***Love Is for Life: A Pastoral Letter Issued on Behalf of the Irish Hierarchy* by Thomas Cardinal O'Fiaich, Archbishop of Armagh; Kevin McNamara, Archbishop of Dublin; Joseph Connane, Archbishop of Tuam; and Thomas Morris, Archbishop of Cashel, Dublin: Mount Salus Press, Lent 1985.**

In writing of sensual pleasures, Thomas Hobbes observed that "the greatest" is "that by which we are invited to give continuance to our species, and the next by which a man is invited to meat, for the preservation of his individual person." From more than one perspective, Hobbes had his priorities straight. Parents, on more than one occasion, have given their last bite of food to their offspring, and laboratory rats have been known to starve to death while stimulating their erotic "pleasure centers." Sex trumps eating every time.

For many pagans—modern as well as ancient—sexual desire is a straightforward affair summed up by Wilde's maxim that the only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it. The Greeks were candidly pragmatic in their approaches to sex. Solon, the austere Athenian lawgiver and moralist, was only one among many who alluded to the delights of pederasty. Erotic passion was, for most of the ancients, a temporary insanity to indulge and then be rid of. Sophocles, a terrible rake even by modern standards, confessed that old age had freed him from a terrible master.

The most compelling image of sexuality was the Roman poet Lucretius' description of dogs locked in an unbreakable coitus. Ancient philosophers, however badly they might have behaved, generally agreed that sex was a distraction from a career of serious study and virtuous living. Since many philosophical sects, e.g., Epicureans and Pythagoreans, functioned as religious communities, the urgent demands of sexual desire could seriously disrupt the harmony of the brotherhood. (In more recent times, the leaders of various sects, like Oneida perfectionists, Shakers, and the Unification Church, have used sexual control as an important tool in controlling their communities.) It was in such a context that the early Christian Church began to shape its own not quite peculiar teachings on sex.

The most astonishing thing to moderns about the New Testament's statements on sex and marriage is the apparent hostility to *eros* in all its forms. To the ancients, however, such statements would have seemed like Stoic commonplaces. What is actually surprising is the Scriptures' openness to marriage and the family. While a life of celibate devotion is viewed as the spiritual pinnacle, marriage is not only confirmed by Jesus but it is also strengthened by his explicit condemnation of divorce as an indulgence granted temporarily to fallen man. The family of the New Testament was not, it should be added, some new institution. It was, in fact, the boilerplate patriarchal family that endured until recent times. Wives and children are to obey husbands and fathers who are, in turn, instructed to cherish and provide for their dependents. The status of woman is, however, implicitly improved, since the mother of Christ, in some sense, counterbalances the degradation of Eve. Sex, so far from being taken lightly, is revealed as possessing a spiritual dimension. Fornication is not merely impure or morally wrong, but, in the view of St. Paul, it creates a spiritual bond between the sinners.

Chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within, submission of wives to husbands, and reverence for the mysterious gift of life—how strange these notions sometimes seem in the nonage of our world. But when we tally up the consequences of our sexual innovations—family dissolution, adolescent suicide, and venereal diseases so terrible that the plagues of Egypt seem like hay fever—when we consider such consequences, the sexual teachings of the Christian Church begin to sound like common sense. Nowhere, outside of Catholic Poland and the Southern Baptist Convention, has the church spoken more plainly than in Ireland, and it is with high hopes that a Christian picks up *Love Is for Life*, a pastoral letter issued by the Irish bishops for Lent 1985. Those high hopes are dashed by the very first sentences of the very first page.

There are few things in life

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> more beautiful and more exalting than the experience of love between man and woman. When a young man and woman are attracted to each other, their love arouses the deepest emotions, the highest expectations, they have ever known. For them, nothing seems to matter but their love. Nothing seems impossible to their love. For each of them, the other is "the only you there is."

What sort of language is this for celibate gentlemen to indulge themselves in—the erotic sentimentalism of "True Confessions" magazines. Unfortunately, the entire letter is replete with such sweet nothings as "sexual union says I love you, in a very profound way." The bishops might take up a profitable second career in writing greeting-card messages.

It is not only the sentimentality that mars *Love Is for Life*. There is an unbecoming trendiness about the whole production. Sex, they declare, is a "means of communication"; they welcome the more wholesome aspects of the sexual revolution like "a new openness in discussion about sexuality, and an absence of unhealthy feelings of guilt or shame." Worse, they endorse the aims of feminism and declare war on the idea of "male superiority." Homosexual acts are, of course, sinful, but they support the campaign to vindicate the rights of "homosexually-oriented persons," etc., etc.

There is a sense in which sexual acts are a form of communication, and talking dirty is always a great deal more fun than feeling guilty. Women and homosexuals are sometimes mistreated, of course, but the bishops appear by their statements to endorse (a) a social science view of morality; (b) the liberation of women from biblical and Catholic "stereotypes"; and (c) special legal status for self-declared deviants. (Even in Ireland they don't persecute secret, much less inactive homosexuals.)

The Pastoral is not all bad. Pornography, sterilization, and abortion are all declared to be evil, and the bishops even come out against sin, but it is with a faltering voice. They are clearly uncomfortable with anything as apparently hard-and-fast as Genesis, which they fear contains "colorful accounts of creation" which "may seem naive to modern ears, and suitable only to the mentality of a pastoral people"; but, the writers assure us, these tales "convey profound theological truths" like, for example, the equality of the sexes.

What is striking about the Irish bishops is not just the severe limitations on their knowledge and methods, but their squeamishness in the face of the facts of life: They appear to believe that traditional sex roles are mere cultural artifacts, and they are not in the least disturbed by the modern obsession with sexual pleasure. Does every culture devote such resources to erotic pleasure? We used to be told that repression was responsible for an unhealthy interest in sex. Well, we have had a sexual revolution that has liberated women from chastity and men from shame. We go openly to singles bars, massage parlors, and pornography theaters, but our sexual fervor may hardly be said to be subsiding.

It is possible that sex is like the drug habit which William Burroughs once summed up memorably in the formula: "The more you have, the more you want." One of sociobiology's central insights is the genetic basis for the different sexual strategies of males and females. While women invest large amounts of energy into producing a single egg per month and in bearing and rearing a few children in a lifetime, males by contrast are capable of begetting a hundred, indeed, thousands of children with comparatively little effort. It is in women's interest (or in their genes' interest) to be coy. For men, the advantages of fidelity are not so obvious.

In a primitive state, sexual opportunities are comparatively limited. If a man is to reproduce himself, he must be alert to sexual signals in the same way that he responds quickly to meat, sugar, and salt—all of which are bare necessities. In civilized circumstances of plenty, we are still responding with the alacrity of impoverished savages. We destroy our teeth and digestion with soft drinks and potato chips, stuff ourselves with meat to the detriment of heart and blood vessels, and gaze longingly at the parade of young women—draped and undraped—we meet on the street, in bars, or in the pages of magazines. An impulse that is healthy, so long as it is generally stifled, becomes a destructive poison as soon as it is readily available. We have learned that much, at least, from the sexual revolution which the Irish bishops are so reluctant to condemn. Perhaps we may also learn that even at the lowest level of enlightened self-interest, "It is better to marry than to burn."

A Hatchery at *The Nation*

by John C. Chalberg

Freda Kirchwey: A Woman of the Nation **by Sara Alpern, Cambridge: Harvard University Press; $29.95.**

If Eleanor Roosevelt was the self-appointed godmother of post-New Deal liberalism, then Freda Kirchwey was its unelected recording (and traveling) secretary. Each woman understood her role and memorized her lines before assuming her part in her long and stormy run on the political stage.

In preparation for her grand entrance each woman took a good hard look at the man's world that was liberal politics, elbowed her way into those smoke-filled rooms, and proceeded to make her presence known—and indispensable—as a political woman. Not content to organize a ladies auxiliary of American liberalism, each realized that her success depended upon her ability—and willingness—to perform womanly, if not necessarily wifely, tasks.

Mrs. FDR may never have wielded a magic wand, but she was indefatigable in her efforts to keep her worshipers on the (seldom) straight and (never) narrow path of (her definition) New Deal orthodoxy. Mrs. Evans Clark (née Freda Kirchwey) may never have been trained to keep a boss cool and the coffee hot, but she certainly knew how to generate a paper flow and an office hum.

From 1918 when a 25-year-old Kirchwey arrived at *The Nation* to clip international stories, to 1937 when she bought the journal from Oswald Garrison Villard, to 1955 when she sold her interest to Carey McWilliams, Mrs. Clark had an almost uninterrupted reign as the woman emergent, the

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woman triumphant, and the woman embattled of *The Nation*. Only during a difficult Florida interlude in the early 1930's, when she tried and failed to nurse her tubercular third son back to health, was she not the woman ever-present at *The Nation*.

Sara Alpern's interest in Freda Kirchwey initially derived not from her singular career as a liberal journalist, but from her triangular life as a wife, mother, and professional woman. How Kirchwey balanced the conflicting demands of her three worlds was the question that drew an awed Alpern to her subject. How Kirchwey negotiated her way among the assorted agendas of her allies on the left was the question that sustained Alpern's project long after the Clark-Kirchwey household ceased to be either inspiring or effective. One Mrs. Evans Clark, unfaithful wife (to an unfaithful husband) and uninterested parent (to her undisciplined remaining child), was simply Ms. Freda Kirchwey, modern woman gone amuck. And not worth a full biography.

But Freda Kirchwey, keeper of the flame of liberal antifascism (and douser of the flickering fire of liberal anti-Communism) is another matter. Here a thorough biography may well be in order, if only because of the extensive influence that her *Nation* used to wield. After all, the damage done to Michael Clark was presumably limited to him. He might blame his upbringing (or lack thereof) on a mother who lacked "maternal fiber." But who are the liberals to hold responsible for their failure to face the evil of Communism in the postwar world?

And if such a question is too distasteful or unfamiliar to them, they could point their collective finger at one Freda Kirchwey. After all, she had long employed her feminine charms toward effecting a permanent union between the wartime odd couple that was the United States and the Soviet Union. Having failed at that venture in matchmaking, she then tried to play midwife at any number of (what she hoped would be non-) aborted moments of postwar collaboration. And, having witnessed innumerable stillbirths, she set out to mother a generation of Americans unable to wean themselves from the pap of Mother Russia.

Sara Alpern, however, is not prepared to point a critical finger at either Mrs. Clark or Ms. Kirchwey. Failure on either the homefront or the Popular Front was apparently not Freda's fault. "Freda and her peers were twentieth century feminists," who, unlike their 19th-century counterparts, "insisted that career and marriage could be combined." After all, who could blame Freda and Evans for thinking they could "raise children without giving up any of their very busy lives," especially when experts were insisting that "childrearing was the province of child development professionals." When it all came crashing down around her there was always psychoanalysis to enter into and *The Nation* to retreat to.

Alpern may occasionally cringe at Kirchwey's shortcomings as a wife, mother, and liberal publicist, but her winces never get beyond an "oh well" shrug, as in "conducting herself as a whole person in office, home and bed was much harder than she (Clark-Kirchwey) had realized." Having early on conceded that she hoped to find in Kirchwey a successful modern woman, Alpern apparently could not bring herself to declare Kirchwey's search for private happiness and public influence a personal failure.

During the 1920's and 1930's, Mrs. Clark went on her own search for answers to her "perennial question of women and careers." Never satisfied with her discoveries, Kirchwey simply abandoned her public pursuit of women's issues and instead turned her considerable energy to "journalistic goals that could be achieved."

And just what were those goals? In reality, there was but one—with a single, if crucial, variation: to make the world free from fascism—and to deny that Communism could ever be a virulent, if carefully disguised, form of fascism. In her fight for feminist independence, a young Mrs. Clark, heady with the aroma of a "modern woman," set out to have it all without looking back. In her fight against fascism in Spain, a middle-aged Ms. Kirchwey, certain that she was on to the scent of her enemies, set herself on a course from which she never turned back. In Freda Kirchwey's world there were only two kinds of political animals: fascists in league with their imperialist fellow travelers and antifascists of all persuasions. Between 1936 and the onset of the Spanish Civil War and 1955 when she left *The Nation* (mercifully on the eve of Khrushchev's revelations) Kirchwey was the personification of the liberals' dictum that there should be no enemies to the left.

As Alpern would have it, Kirchwey saw her role as the ultimate mother hen. Rather than remove the bad eggs or lock out any wayward chickens, she would draw her brood to her comfortably fashionable antifascist hen house. And the Soviet Union, "despite many imperfections," remained to Kirchwey an antifascist state long after the battle against its Hitlerian brand had ended.

What of those liberals who did not share her principle of nonexclusion? They simply chose to exclude themselves. Louis Fischer "noisily resigned" in June of 1945 over *The Nation's* editorial contention that Poland had to be sacrificed to allied unity. Reinhold Niebuhr and Robert Bendiner subsequently left *The Nation* to found the liberal anti-Communist Americans for Democratic Action.

Kirchwey officially (and officiously) refused to take sides between the ADA and the Wallaceite Progressive Citizens of America. Instead she contented herself with deploring the division within liberalism. But her own unwillingness to see the Soviet Union for what it was—and is—helped to make the split unavoidable. To her credit, Kirchwey did not support the "foolish" Wallace candidacy in 1948, because it had both too much Communist and too little labor support. That singular exception aside, she followed the frayed Popular Front line—even to the point of blaming the United States for contributing to the Czech coup of 1948 by its refusal to lend money to the Masaryk government.

To her credit, Alpern has remembered what Kirchwey had conveniently forgotten: namely, that the Soviets had "dissuaded" the Czechs from accepting Marshall Plan money. Alpern also reminds her readers that Kirchwey could be guilty of the "sin" that George Orwell attributed to "nearly all left-wingers from 1933 onwards": namely, the desire to be "anti-fascist without being anti-totalitarian." But, just as Kirchwey stopped well short of any fundamental criticism of the "workers' paradise," so does Alpern

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excuse Kirchwey of any motive worse than excessive goodwill.

To their credit, not all liberals shared Kirchwey's politics. For what now appears to be a steadily shrinking historical moment between 1945 and, say, 1965, the phrase "liberal anti-Communism" was, for other than Kirchwey liberals, not an oxymoron. From the perspective of the late 1980's, however, it has become all too apparent that the Kirchwey approach to international affairs has once again cast its spell over the liberal mind. Thirty years ago this "madame secretary" might have thought that she had lost her brood and her battle. Not so today.

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CORRESPONDENCE

Letter From Chile

by Geoffrey Wagner

Among the Lakes

My advice to anyone who wants to see some of the most polite people around is to get to Chile soon—before we declare war on it or the media level it into the likeness of a London suburb, with a bust of Lenin in every town hall, tax-funded homes for lesbians, and a veto on golliwog dolls.

My wife, Colleen, and I were all but put off from going recently by inflammatory headlines, chiefly in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post*, to the effect that the country was in total turmoil, demonstrations in the capital constant, power stations blown up nightly, and the like. In eight days in and around Santiago and Viña, and weeks in the lake district to the south, we saw none of this. We also had the pleasure of not hearing a word of politics there, despite meeting several ministers and their wives and once attending a fairly high-level governmental party at the Bellas Artes museum, hostessed by the lovely doyenne of the establishment, Nena Ossa. Frankly, the first impression any traveler must get in Chile is of the really high-grade nature of everyone around. Baggage handlers at the airport could well double for doctors on our sit-com TV.

At a time when the wallpaper journalism of the West was mounting a fairly hysterical hate campaign to claw down Pinochet, who has said he will step down for fair elections, Santiago was thinly, extremely politely, policed by the Carabinieri, though I suspect they don't take kindly to having Molotov cocktails chucked at them. A 1:00-5:00 a.m. curfew created a quiet night for which everyone seemed grateful, barring a few nightclub owners. During a changing of the guard outside the Moneda, or palace barracks, I saw U.S. television crews (by their beards shall ye know them), obviously hostile to the regime, permitted to poke their snouts in everywhere. As for freedom of the press I can only say that *Hustler* was on sale in my hotel (though it is banned in the Caribbean island where I have a home), while a block away Mariel Hemingway was showing—and showing quite a bit, too—in *Star 80*. There was some mild fuss over the expulsion of an American journalist who had filed an account of the police killing of three civilians, because his story was found to be a total fabrication.

However, except for some handsome outlying architecture and the bosky side-streets off Leones, where a registered girl-watcher can go crazy, Santiago cannot be called a graceful city, though it is certainly not a sad one like Lima. What it possesses for both European and *norteamericano* alike is an astonishing, forgotten courtesy, while its French-built Metro has to blow the mind of anyone fated to travel the New York City subway. No graffiti or litter in the comfortable cars where schoolgirls in navy tunics cheerfully yield their seats to the old. It is also incredibly cheap, though not so cheap as Mexico City's underground, state subsidized to the point where a ticket sells for less than the cost of printing it. Santiago struck me as a provincial capital, without the shopping or gastronomy of Buenos Aires. Its wines are, of course, another matter, Chile being virtually the vineyard of South America. A bottle of the ubiquitous Undurrago white, a Rheinwein approximation, costs less than one American dollar *on the restaurant table*. You can buy it for postage stamps in stores. Chileños take baths in the stuff. No, southwards lies the glory.

In 90 comfortable minutes Ladeco will fly you down to Temuco, where you may rent a yanqui car to be turned in later at Puerto Montt, lower down. The roads here are superlative and, interestingly, such is local courtesy that, if hitchhikers are few, they expect to be picked up. This Andean lake area is not only glorious but unexploited, barring spots of some of the finest powder-base skiing in the world. Around November there seem to be almost no tourists at all—liberalism has done its work—and the ice-blue lakes are fringed with snow-capped volcanoes, their lower slopes heavy with fir and southern beach. This

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sparsely populated countryside is Scandinavian in feel and the motels are timbered, ski-lodge affairs, with log fires blazing in your bedroom.

At Pucon we were, apart from one peripatetic Englishman, the only guests at the Antumalal lodge perched over the long Villarrica lake. The manager was genuinely puzzled by our request for a key to our room; there was none. We had entered the almost forgotten world of total trust.

The excursions around Pucon could be delightfully Swiss or Bavarian at will, with the nearby national park presided over by an active volcano (high drama at night). Twenty-five kilometers down a country track, Lake Caburga was lovely, the returning motorist rewarded by a glorious open-air steep in a steaming mountainside thermal bath at Huife. No one about but for the concierge of the simple establishment and her two chubby, rose-cheeked children.

From Pucon it is a day's drive down to Nilque on the south shore of Lake Puyehue, another lake fisherman's paradise. More rustic stone thermal baths here and a more ambitious lakeside motel, popular in season with skiers making for the justly celebrated Antillanca slopes. After visiting a few invigorating waterfalls, or *saltos*, and generally hiking the mountainsides, we struck further south to find the gem of the district at the end of the line, that is unless you intend to investigate Antarctica.

From pretty lakeside Ensenada a cinder or volcanic-lava track runs a gritty 30 kilometers down the Reloncavi estuary to Ralun, ostensibly no more than a scatter of farmers' and fishermen's shacks. The tidal lake, on which excursions may be taken, is ringed by the ice-cream cone of the Osorno volcano, the spiky Mount Calbuco, and the great grave Argentinian Tronador, or thunderer, in the distance. The untouched wooded slopes and lakeside walks under the snowline are idyllic. We spent one crisp morning alone by the lovely falls of Petrohué, with acres of broom in golden bloom, plus butterflies that would have sent Nabokov crazy, until a busload of giggling uniformed schoolgirls debouched from a bus and cascaded all over my wife with questions about America. How boring it must be to travel by the liberal Baedeker, and miss scenes like these.

Geoffrey Wagner is a retired City College English professor who travels widely in South America.

Letter From Boyhood

by John W. Aldridge

Candy Store Dreams

Boyhood was once a distinct and definable stage in the life cycle of the American male. It was also by the standards of today almost unbelievably innocent. At least it was in the small Midwestern city where I grew up just before the Depression. There was no available sex or television. Drugs were unknown; racial conflict did not exist (if only because everybody seemed white); and crime was a phenomenon you were thrilled to hear about on forbidden radio mystery programs late at night, after parents had gone to bed. The result was that we had to compensate for these deprivations as best we could through the ferocity of our play and the limited fertility of our imaginations.

I remember that in the summers after school was out, we always went barefoot and did dangerous things. We would climb up on the roofs of garages and jump off, pretending we were crashing airplanes. At the ages of eight or 10, aviation and record-setting flights across the Atlantic were much on our minds, and we would swing in the swings in the park playing Charles A. Lindbergh or Post and Gatty until we were going high and fast. Then we would leap off the seats and see who could jump the farthest. Sometimes because of some disagreement or just for fun we would form into warring gangs and pelt one another with stones and clods of dirt.

On the Fourth of July, which was excitingly lethal before the enactment of all the safety laws, we had fireworks of great variety and explosive power. They were the small round torpedoes that had an oddly flaky, parchment-like surface and went off with a fair bang when thrown against something. We threw them at one another or set them on the streetcar tracks. When the car came and they exploded, the motorman would always open the door and step down to the street and stand shaking his fist at the world. If this happened when it was sufficiently dark, one of us might sneak up to the rear of the car and yank the trolley wheel off the overhead wire. This would stop the motor and cause all the lights in the car to go out and send the motorman into a bellowing fit of apoplexy.

Then there were the small ladyfingers that came tied together in a packet and sounded like a machine gun when they exploded. If we had the money, we bought large firecrackers that could be as long as 10 inches and had the blast of a shotgun. We buried them up to their fuses in the dirt and set them under tin cans or in the hollow legs of iron fences so that they went off with a louder bang

BOOKS IN BRIEF

U.S.-Soviet Summits **by Gordon Weihmiller and Dusko Doder, Lanham, MD: Institute for the Study of Diplomacy/University Press of America; 230 pp.** This is useful reference to the 10 major U.S./USSR summits of 1955-85. It covers the background and outcome of each meeting, the most recent being the Reagan-Gorbachev meeting in Geneva in November 1985. In addition to thoughtful analysis of every summit, a factual summary of each includes their published agreements and communiqués.

Promise or Peril: The Strategic Defense Initiative**, edited by Zbigniew Brzezinski, Washington, DC: Ethics & Public Policy Center; 480 pp.** *Promise or Peril* is a comprehensive collection of 36 short articles on historical, political, technical, and moral dimensions of SDI. It contains Soviet and American perspectives as well as views from Western Europe, arms control documents, chronology, and glossary. It is an excellent reference for what has become a central issue in arms control discussions.

Religious Prisoners in the USSR**, edited by Michael Rowe, Keston, UK: Greenfire/ Keston College; 160 pp.** With a foreword by the émigré poetess Irina Ratushinskaya, this dense book contains documentation of the latest Soviet laws on religion as well as hundreds of cases of persecuted religious believers, along with their addresses.

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or threw up a shower of dirt or sent the cans tumbling high in the air.

Our main source of supply for fireworks was a candy store located just down the street from the park. The store was a magical, even a holy place where every imaginable good thing could be bought for a nickel, dime, or quarter. In the rear was a soda fountain with wire chairs that had bluish gray cloth slipcovers pulled over their backs. Along one wall near the entrance was a large glass-fronted case containing candy bars of every known variety—Baby Ruths, Milky Ways, Snickers, Mounds, Hersheys, O'Henrys, Mr. Goodbars, Clark bars, Mars bars, cream- and jelly-filled chocolates, whole cherries covered with meringue, marzipan, and chocolate—and there were other brands that were wonderfully exotic but too expensive for us. In the large bay windows facing the street was the fireworks display—skyrockets shaped like arrows with cones for heads, Roman candles, enormous sparklers, enough firecrackers of all sizes and degrees of lethality to blow up half the neighborhood.

Along the wall opposite the candy case was a big rack holding a vast number of magazines, most of them pulps: *Operator-5*, *Spider*, *Doc Savage*, *The Shadow*, *Argosy*, *Marvel Tales*, *G-8 and His Battle Aces*, all of which I bought and read with the most intense concentration. Then there were the science-fiction magazines—*Astounding Stories*, *Amazing Stories*, *Wonder Stories*—which I took even more seriously because I had firm plans to grow up to be either a chemist or an astronomer and was already a regular mail-order customer of the Chemkit Chemical Company of Hagerstown, Maryland, which supplied me with test tubes, flasks, beakers, and little wooden kegs of various concoctions for my basement laboratory. I took science-fiction so seriously that I developed an addiction to it that lasted from about the age of nine until around 16, when it seemed to me that the quality of the writing had suddenly declined.

The covers of some of these magazines were miracles of lurid erotic suggestiveness. A typical scene (and there were a thousand variations) might offer up a gorgeous flaxen-haired girl clad in a pair of provocatively ripped black-lace panties and clutching a torn piece of some other intimate garment to her perfectly globular breasts—all this while she is thrashing in the embrace of a dragon-faced space fiend who has long red fangs dripping with lust and who holds in one clawed hand a huge ray gun that is shooting a molten stream of radioactive deadliness at a space-suited figure hanging weightless in the gray cosmic distance.

All these magazines had abundant front and back matter devoted to advertisements, and these provided us with a somewhat subtler kind of titillation and instruction. They appealed not just to our nascent sexual potency but to our sense of complete impotence in all other spheres of human endeavor. In nearly every issue of the pulps Charles Atlas had a full-page ad in which he confessed that he too was once a 97-pound weakling with stringy muscles and a scrawny chest. He illustrated his former helplessness with a cartoon showing a 97-pound weakling being humiliated at the beach by a burly thug who delighted in kicking sand into the poor devil's face. But then Atlas told about his discovery of a miraculous exercise technique known as "Dynamic Tension" that enabled him to develop the beautiful bulging physique shown in the accompanying photograph of himself standing with gleaming spread legs and massive flexed biceps. After that achievement the beach bully never again dared to harass him, and the gorgeous girls in bathing suits couldn't keep their hands off his body.

Then there was the ad that promised to send by return mail a new kind of X-ray telescope that made one capable of seeing through bedroom walls and girls' dresses and that had us pop-eyed with visions of possibility. Other ads offered instruction by an oracular-looking, goateed gentleman named Sherwin Cody in how to improve one's spoken English until one could be completely at ease in dinner conversation with the highest levels of society. Or there were courses that could be taken at home In Your Spare Time that would train one to become an expert radio technician or to play a musical instrument, As Easy As ABC. Still others assured us of similar quick ascendancies to various forms of luxury, social prominence, good health, and power. One could buy Beautiful Life-like Photo Rings (Be the First on Your Block to Own One); reading glasses that would make you look like a movie star for $2.95; enough insurance to cover the entire family for just $1.00 a month (Think of the Peace of Mind); Page's Pile Tablets that would do for one's bowel movements what the Rosicrucians and their Mysteries of Life could do for one's soul.

In short, at a tender age we were given a complete education in the very best promises of the American Dream. The magazine covers provided us with magnificent images of what sex was going to be like if we ever became old enough to have any, while the ads assured us that on the no less erotic plane of solid American technology and know-how we need have no fear of the future because when we grew up, if only we applied ourselves, we could all become Charles Atlases, learn a rewarding trade, speak properly, and even play an instrument proficiently, at those gatherings where people began by laughing when you sat down at the piano.

John W. Aldridge, professor of English at the University of Michigan, is the author of After the Lost Generation, The Devil in the Fire, *and other volumes of criticism.*

Letter From Albion

by Andrei Navrozov

In Defense of Conspicuous Consumption

After my March letter, "Three Days in Sodom, Two in Gomorrah," readers of this magazine have written to ask why I am so down on conspicuous consumption. I want to go on record here: I am not. But even a gourmand should disapprove of gluttony, since pleasure exists only insofar as it is subject to will. If you think about it, this applies to all human activity of which conspicuous consumption is the fruit: "Labor not for the meat which perisheth," we read in John 6:27, "but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life." The scientific advances in refrigeration, the spread of vegetarianism, and the art of *nouvelle cuisine* change nothing.

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A book entitled *The Fashion Conspiracy* is all the rage here. It is a chatty book, by a chatty man (Nicholas Coleridge) who edits a chatty magazine (*Harpers & Queen*), written for chatty people; that it has received so much attention in the pages of serious periodicals run by sober editors and read by ordinary people is largely attributable to the author's digressions from his fashionable subject. In these, the author "exposes" the industry's terrible secret, namely (in the words of one serious reviewer) the fact that

> serious money can be made in the fashion business, although outworkers, on whom the business relies, may be illiterate, confined to barrack-like sweatshops in Seoul or Stoke Newington, and useless after the age of 25 when their eyes give out.

Here is another revelation: "thousands" of dresses, "thousands" of dollars each, are never picked up from the cleaners by their owners. Where? The Meshal Dry Laundry in Kuwait. "Meanwhile, in a sweatshop in Madras . . . "

All right, what's the point? The point is that any fool can draw a line between wise consumption and unwise consumption, and only an idiot will do it using facts and figures. The author of *The Fashion Conspiracy* is one such fool, but he is too chatty; so let us turn to the source, to the idiot if you will. He is, of course, John Kenneth Galbraith, Warburg Professor of Economics Emeritus at Harvard, sometime Ambassador to India, and erstwhile *Fortune* editor. Last year, his book *A View From the Stands* was published here and in the U.S., and I propose that one look at it will rehabilitate conspicuous consumption, from Balducci's to Valentino, in the eyes of the strictest of Puritans.

People, politics, military power, and the arts are the subjects enumerated in the book's subtitle. The absence of economics, Professor Galbraith's own field, is noteworthy but not surprising: Professor Galbraith is a thinker in the Hegelian tradition of presumptive omniscience who writes on any subject with equal confidence and facility. As he (modestly) acknowledges, these essays are "the less solemn offering"; yet like his economic writings of the past they give a cogent expression to the Galbraith world view. What is it?

Since the 1950's, when *American Capitalism*, *A Theory of Price Control*, and *The Affluent Society* appeared and were deemed "influential," Professor Galbraith has believed that American society consists of the rich and the poor, concepts which, in his mind, possess as much meaning as they did for Marx a century earlier. In the essays included in this book, in a variety of contexts, he continues to speak of the two "classes," though it may be expected that his readers are even more bewildered by this time-worn wordplay today than they had been in years past.

In a 1984 essay, "The Inconvenient Reverse Logic of Our Time," for instance, Professor Galbraith speaks of "Americans living below the poverty level" as if the definition of poverty by a particular government (one which, in 1984, he incidentally abhorred) had some transcendent value. Struggling for a more concise definition of the downtrodden class, he uses another yardstick: "a minimum of decency and happiness." Yet what that minimum is we are never told, nor can we know with ultimate certainty if decency and happiness consist in faith in God, guaranteed income, or success in a game of poker.

Way back in the 1920's, "the founder of socialist planning," S.G. Strumilin, developed the Soviet "norm of consumption" for every man-machine: 1,250 calories a day. In practical terms, this was to mean 1.54 lb. of rye flour in addition to 0.25 lb. of groats (although 0.25 lb. of meat, 0.006 lb. of sugar, and 0.05 lb. of animal fat were theoretically included), and all human wants beyond this "scientific norm" would henceforth be known as "artificially generated," that is, superfluous. Is Professor Galbraith's method of measuring the "minimum of decency and happiness" any different from Strumilin's? Only, I suspect, in that it is less "scientific," based more on the subjective upper-middle-class whimsy of a Harvard intellectual than on the "objective needs of the Soviet state."

In a 1966 essay, "The Starvation of the Cities," Professor Galbraith writes: "We can easily afford an income floor. It would cost about $20 billion to bring everyone up to what the Department of HEW considers a reasonable minimum." This, to him, is an acceptable criterion, and yet in the same paragraph he says with disapproval that the same amount would be wasted "during the next fiscal year to restore freedom, democracy, and religious liberty, as these are defined by experts, in Vietnam." Why do some experts in the U.S. government know more about happiness and freedom than others? Only, I suspect, because the author of *How to Get Out of Vietnam* disagrees with some people and agrees with others, an excusable human trait that makes for an idiot's public policy.

It must be noted, incidentally, that Professor Galbraith did not write his study of the Vietnam conflict in 1954 to advise the U.S. government, ready to defend South Vietnam, how to win the war for which its bureaucracy was no better prepared than it was for anything else. He wrote the study in 1967 to tell the U.S. government how to lose the war, abandon South Vietnam, "get out"! Anyone can write pamphlets on how to lose a war, just as anyone can advise the government on how to redistribute its tax revenues or berate it for its failure to provide its citizens with "a minimum of decency and happiness."

Time and again, as in the 1984 essay on "Money in American Fiction," Professor Galbraith enlarges on his axiomatic distinction between the happy rich and the miserable poor, but nowhere is his vision of society so absurdly materialist as in his view of "work," a concept which he had defined with Hegelian completeness early in his career (in *The Affluent Society*) as "any exertion of mind or body undergone partially or wholly with a view to some good other than the pleasure derived directly from work." Personally, as a writer, I have never done a day's work by Professor Galbraith's definition and would surely have been exiled or incarcerated for parasitism in Strumilin's Russia. Yet, as a denizen of the free West, I am protected from the good professor's idea of "work" every bit as much as I am immune to his notion of "decency and happiness." So, fortunately for them, are all the other poor and downtrodden whose champion Professor Galbraith has been ever since his days at *Fortune*.

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And we owe it all to conspicuous consumption.

Andrei Navrozov is poetry editor of Chronicles.

Letter From the Lower Right

by John Shelton Reed

Jesse, I Hardly Knew Ye

Some of us down here took exception a while back when John Aldridge referred to Jimmy Carter as "a redneck peanut farmer from Georgia." We felt it was a gross libel on rednecks.

Of course, Aldridge didn't mean to be complimentary. Calling our former President that was about as malicious, as offensive, and as beside the point as calling Jesse Jackson a nigger preacher from Chicago. Call Carter naive; call him ineffectual; call him, even, a wimp. Call Jackson manipulative; call him hypocritical; call him, even, a knave. But let's stick to name-calling that has something to do with character, ability, or performance.

What prompts me to bring this up is the apparently quadrennial newsworthiness of Mr. Jackson. Here he is back again, like a bad penny. It's tempting to say that he's the Democrats' problem—and it is fun to watch them tiptoe around him as if he were a land mine. But he's not just an accident waiting to happen to somebody else's party, he's a problem for the rest of us, too.

Not that he's going to be President, or even the Democratic nominee. Surely by the time this appears in print, that will be evident to all. Even the Democrats aren't *that* suicidal. But it's regrettable that he has somehow become the de facto spokesman for black Americans. If he's accommodated by the political system, it will be disastrous. But if he isn't, many blacks will apparently feel rebuked and scorned, still again. They don't need that, and the nation doesn't either.

How can we account for the extent of his support in the black community? Surely many black Americans know better. Surely their defense of this indefensible man is reflexive, knee-jerk, much the same as what I felt when John Aldridge made me momentarily regret that I hadn't voted for Jimmy Carter. They must suspect that white folks dislike Jackson for the wrong reasons—the way I *know* some people disliked Carter because he was a Georgian. Some of Jackson's supporters even imply from time to time that it's only because he's black that he won't be nominated.

Friends, that's rubbish. The fact of the matter is that if he weren't black, you never would've heard of him. His politics wouldn't get him to first base in this country. He is, basically, a black Jim Hightower.

Jim who? (That's my point. Hightower is a Texas populist whose political career has probably topped out at agriculture commissioner.) A writer in the London *Spectator* got it exactly right when he observed: "If Jesse Jackson fails to be elected to office in the United States this year it will not be because he is a black man but because he is a socialist." And, he added, "Americans, very sensibly, do not like socialists at all."

There is, in addition, the matter of inexperience. As Mayor Young of Detroit observes: "Jesse ain't never run anything except his mouth."

Personally, I regret that the *right* reasons why sensible people, black and white, should dislike Jackson—or at least dislike the idea of entrusting him with any responsibility—are so compelling. I started out with a warm spot in my heart for him. Of course, I briefly had high hopes for Jimmy Carter, too.

Still, Jackson did go to North Carolina A&T in Greensboro, and he's been a loyal alumnus. And the mother of a friend of mine knew his mother, back in South Carolina, and said she was a fine woman. (The South is still like that.) Besides, like many Southerners, I'm a pushover for the traditional black-preacher rhetorical style, and give Jackson credit: he spews rhetoric like a Ted Sorenson in meltdown. Much of it is baby talk, but you can pan in that stream and find real gold. How about this, from the summer of 1987: "I'd rather run to the special interests than run from the special prosecutor." Not bad—not bad at all. Hard to imagine Walter Mondale coming up with that.

Besides, Jackson used to say some *good things*. My memory isn't what it used to be, but I sure do remember his addressing a convocation in Chapel Hill 15 or 16 years ago. He was preceded on the program by an economics professor who droned on through a paper on (as I recall) "human capital development." Our black students had turned out in force to hear Jackson, and their impatience became manifest in conversations less and less *sotto voce*. When it came Jackson's turn to speak, he began by chewing them out. He said their manners were abominable, and their mamas would be ashamed of them. Besides, he said, the professor was saying things they ought to pay attention to. How were they ever going to amount to anything if they didn't shut up and listen to people who knew more than they did? (The professor was Ray Marshall, incidentally, who later became Secretary of Labor.)

That's the Jesse Jackson some of us used to admire. He was an impressive figure, preaching self-reliance and self-respect to a demoralized people who seemed ready to hear that message. It's hard to imagine *that* Jesse Jackson even thinking "Hymietown," much less saying it—and he didn't pick that up in the South, by the way.

So, how did a black preacher with Southern manners and all-American values become a virtual Sandinista in little more than a decade? Was it an act all along, just opportunism, recognizing that becoming the favorite civil-rights leader of people like me would pay off in money for PUSH and influence for Jackson? Did it just stop paying?

Or has Jackson really changed? Did influence and celebrity go to his head? Did he fall in with bad companions? (He certainly *has* some now, not just minor-league bigmouths like Louis Farrakhan, but the real McCoy: Fidel and Arafat and Daniel "Specs" Ortega.)

If the old Jesse was a charlatan, he sure fooled me. But I almost hope he was. Because if he wasn't—if he was the leader I thought he might be—what has become of him is tragic.

John Shelton Reed was recently in India as a Fulbright Distinguished Lecturer in American Studies.

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SCREEN

The Vanishing Adult

by Richard Hobby

In *Fatal Attraction* (1987), a woman jilted by her one-night stand strikes back: she leaves his six-year-old daughter's rabbit boiling on the stove, pours sulfuric acid on his car, harasses him with vitriolic and abusive cassettes, stages an aggressive suicide, makes anonymous phone calls to his wife, kidnaps his daughter, and, half-crazed, stalks his wife with a butcher knife. She is finally shot by the wife.

What are we to make of this? Hell hath no fury like a woman scorned? Perhaps. But more importantly, this movie represents—at least metaphorically—the state of relations between men and women in the films of the 80's. Looking over the movies of the past 50 years, it becomes strikingly clear that although celluloid men and women can still feel an erotic attraction for one another, they have become increasingly confrontational, distrustful, hostile, destructive, dangerous, even deadly.

In the 30's, 40's, or even the 50's, if you went to the movies, chances are you saw men and women who got along reasonably well. If they had problems, they were usually overcome. Glancing through the notebook I keep of every movie I see, I find such examples as *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934), *The Gay Divorcee* (1934), *Cyrano de Bergerac* (1950), and *Magnificent Obsession* (1954).

Not every one of the earlier movies had harmonious relations. Still, marital concord predominated. In the last 10 years, things almost never work out between men and women. Again, looking through my notebook, I see such movies as *Sophie's Choice* (1982), *Cat People* (1982), and *Country* (1984). Is it any better with foreign movies? Not at all: *Don's Party* (Australian, 1976), *Pauline at the Beach* (French, 1983), *Ploughman's Lunch* (English, 1984), *Paris, Texas* (German, 1984).

It is certainly true that earlier movies had adultery, murder, crime, and dissolution of all kinds. But even within that context we find a difference. Take *Double Indemnity* (1944) and *Body Heat* (1981), the same story 40 years later. Fred MacMurray and William Hurt are each drawn by an evil woman into murdering her husband. Despite the identical plot, there is one startling difference: MacMurray is an adult, and Hurt is not. And if we look at the movies I listed earlier, we find the same pattern. There are adult men and women in the older movies. But by the 80's, they have all but disappeared from the screen. What we find instead are children or half-formed adults. There is a causal link: when men and women have not grown up, they cannot sustain healthy relations, for they inevitably act like insecure children.

Most fundamentally, an adult has an identity. He knows who he is, where he fits in his society, what he is about. He is fully formed, self-possessed, self-contained. He has an inner life he can draw on. Certainly this is true of Glenn Ford in *The Big Heat* or of Humphrey Bogart in *Casablanca*. And Major Strasser, also from *Casablanca*, may be evil, but he is no child. But we cannot say the same for Dustin Hoffman in *The Graduate* (1967) or for anyone in any of Woody Allen's movies. It is no accident that Allen made *Play It Again Sam* (1972), which is a lament that he cannot be an adult man like Bogart and which contrasts Bogart, Ingrid Bergman, and Paul Henreid with Allen, Diane Keaton, and Tony Roberts. All of Allen's films ask the question: Bogart grew up, why can't I?

An adult lives in a world of moral rules, of right and wrong, good and evil, thou-shalt-nots. He takes them seriously. Actions have weight. In *The Big Chill* (1983), where no one has grown up, one woman allows her husband to impregnate her lonely best friend. This infidelity is treated as if it had no consequences. All actions become trivial in the nonadult world, but an adult must pay for evil. When Robert Mitchum in *Out of the Past* (1947) follows Jane Greer to Mexico and betrays his boss, he knows there will be serious consequences. This is a world of good people and bad people. When Mitchum describes Greer as bad, his girlfriend says that nobody is all bad. To which he replies, "Maybe. But she comes the closest."

Compare this with the remake of *Out of the Past*, *Against All Odds* (1984), with the Mitchum and Greer parts played by Jeff Bridges and Rachel Ward, who remain children, apparent victims of a system over which they have no control. We don't hold small children responsible for their actions. Evil carried out by children we call pathology. In any case, we don't expect children to play by our rules because playing by the rules includes a certain attention to social conventions and decorum. In *Casablanca*, Rick, Strasser, and Louis all follow adult protocol. They dress for dinner, they address each other formally, and so on. In consequence, their battles and confrontations possess a certain elegance. There is nothing very elegant about the upper-class Jack Nicholson in *Five Easy Pieces*. Responding to an officious waitress, Nicholson shoves all the dishes on the table onto the floor like a spoiled child that can't control itself. Characters in contemporary films have to act out every feeling. They are dominated by the id, naturalness, spontaneity. (Nicholson's method acting institutionalizes these very principles.)

Grown men and women know that maturity is worth the price. They do not glorify childhood. It is interesting to look at two children's movies: *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) and *E.T.* (1982). In *The Wizard of Oz*, Dorothy lives in Kansas on a farm surrounded by wise and loving adults. She goes on a heroic journey and meets mythic creatures

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who teach her about the things a child needs to learn in growing up: courage, the ability to love and give, and reason. She also learns about bogus adults like Oz, who is only pretending to an authority he does not possess: Beware of children masquerading as adults. It teaches her about good and evil: there are good witches and evil witches. In the beginning of the movie, Dorothy complains about her life in Kansas—reality—and dreams of escape ("Somewhere over the rainbow"). By the end of her journey, she returns to Kansas with a greater appreciation of the adult world. She is growing up. In *E.T.* all of this is turned on its head. The suburban family has been abandoned by the father. Men in general are ominous. The mother is nice but ineffectual; she is not an adult. The ugly creature from outer space confirms the message that older people are the enemies of children, that all virtue, resourcefulness, and sensitivity reside with children. It is a flight from adulthood that is both sentimental and cynical.

The old movies lent credence to the old-fashioned idea that, whatever their similarities, men are men and women are women, that there are such things as masculinity and femininity. Feminine and masculine traits complemented and strengthened each other. The more feminine a woman was, the more she drew out the protective nature of a man; the more masculine he was, the more he drew out her femininity. The key point is that the old order allowed and encouraged a man and a woman to give themselves to each other, body and soul. The old films that ended triumphantly with a wedding were not unrealistic. The most natural way for a woman to fulfill herself and enter the adult world was by marrying and having a child. Men desired women; women desired to be desired. There was nothing demeaning in all this. It did not diminish the woman, turn her into chattel. Marriage allowed her a safe way to become a wise adult woman and to pass on her wisdom and experience to her children. This, said the movies of 40 or 50 years ago, was the road to happiness for women.

Not every woman in the old movies was feminine, but consider the wide variety of feminine types: Carole Lombard, Mae West, Ingrid Bergman, Rita Hayworth, and Grace Kelly. Even Margaret Dumont in the Marx Brothers movies wanted only to give herself, believe it or not, to Groucho. Contrast this with the characters played by the new actresses, who make themselves unattractive by their contempt for men: Jill Clayburgh, Susan Anspach, Meryl Streep, Patricia Hodge, Jessica Lange, for example. Diane Keaton's women (like Annie Hall) are not contemptuous, but their femininity is that of an insecure child. What they all have in common is that none of them can give herself away to a man.

Men give themselves to women by their acts of gallantry and sacrifice. In *A Night to Remember* (1958), the men let women and children go first, while they stayed behind on the sinking

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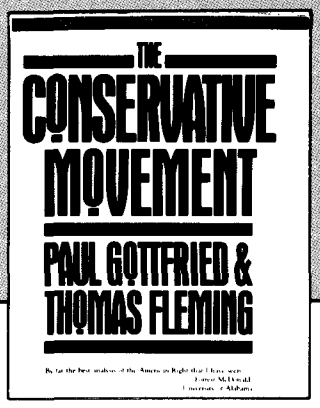

The Conservative Movement

Paul Gottfried and Thomas Fleming

Appearing in a crucial presidential election year, this is a timely analysis of one of the most powerful political and social forces in America. It is the first objective critical approach to the conservative movement, clarifying its ideologies, goals, impact, differences with liberalism, and growth from 1945 to 1987. Quoting politicans, lobbyists, journalists and intellectuals — including Burke, Buckley, Kirk and many others — scholars Gottfried and Fleming clearly outline the characteristics of conservatism: an anti-Soviet stance, advocacy of unlimited material opportunity, and exaltation of custom as the protector of social morality. A significant contribution of this study is its exposé of the movement's fragmentation. In their thought-provoking chapter on conservatism's future after Reagan, the authors predict that this fragmentation may be the movement's demise.

Table of Contents

1. **Forming a Worldview: The Conservatism of the Fifties**
2. **Before and After Goldwater: Conservatism in the Sixties**
3. **Ivory Tower/Ivory Gate: The Conservative Mind on Campus**
4. **Revolt of the Intellectuals: The Neoconservatives**
5. **Populist Rebellion: The New Right**
6. **Postscript: Reagan and Beyond**

Bibliographic Essay
Index

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Titanic. Leslie Howard in *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (1934), by pretending to be a fop, sacrifices his public reputation and endures the opprobrium of his wife, all in order to cover up his heroic escapades. For another model of virility, think of Fred Astaire in almost anything; then compare Howard and Astaire with Jeremy Irons in *Brideshead Revisited* or *The French Lieutenant's Woman* (1981). Similar types in a way, but the inner strength is gone. Or compare Clark Gable, Bogart, or Mitchum, who exude a virile integrity, to that caricature of virility, Sylvester Stallone, the new barbarian male.

In contemporary films, women do not feel safe and protected; and men do not provide authority and protection. As men have become weaker, women have become harder, colder. This switch is not really a reversal. Hardness is not masculinity; it is femininity thwarted. These women are covering up insecurity with a mask of supercompetence. It is neither a virtue nor true strength. And weakness and bungling is not feminine. Rather it is masculinity thwarted, an emasculation, the ruination of masculine virtue and authority. The gelded male, dealing with the harpy, chooses a strategy of appeasement.

It is no accident that there has been a great increase in the number of movies about homosexuals. To a large extent homosexuality in men and women is an expression of this loss of masculinity and femininity, a way of avoiding giving themselves away to the opposite sex. Women who become "granola dykes" and "lipsticks" express an aggressive contempt for men. Male homosexuality allows men to escape this contempt—no appeasement is necessary.

One of the strongest images of this loss of robust adult masculinity comes from Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958). Jimmy Stewart, a cop, chasing a criminal across the rooftops, slips and winds up dangling in midair, unable to go back or forward. It is the perfect image of the new man, caught between boyhood and adulthood, who falls in love with and becomes obsessed by a woman who is dead.

Cop movies can tell us a great deal about changes in masculinity. Look at Glenn Ford in *The Big Heat* (1953) and Clint Eastwood in *Tightrope* (1985). Eastwood could be Ford 30 years later. He is a good man who fights heroically against evil. But whereas Ford is married to a loving wife, Eastwood's wife left him and is involved with another man. Ford's wife is murdered by gangsters, but Ford's memory of her causes him to resist the seductive charms of the gangster's moll. Eastwood goes to prostitutes after his wife abandons him. In *The Big Heat*, the threat is from the adult world: the head of the mob is evil, but he is in full command of his faculties. The threat in *Tightrope* comes from a psychopathic killer. In *The Big Heat*, the police are corrupt, but they return to being good cops by the force of Ford's example. The police in *Tightrope* are not corrupt but ineffectual. Ford is able to protect his child from killers: he contacts his brother-in-law, who—with four war buddies—provides a very effective force against the intrusion of evil. But in *Tightrope*, the killer is able to enter Eastwood's house, murder the housekeeper, and terrorize his two daughters, raping one of them. Glenn Ford never doubts the rightness of his actions. Eastwood has self-doubts, seeing parallels—quite correctly—between the killer and himself. The protections and supports that Ford could call on are, in *Tightrope*, missing or greatly reduced in power. The orderly world of adult rules, of authority and protection, has faded.

This adult world does not arise spontaneously. It exists in large measure because a generation of wise adults is able to pass on its wisdom as a gift to the next generation. The sign of this in movies is the presence of older and wiser people, who guide a younger generation toward full maturity. In *It Happened One Night* (1934), the father of the bride is present. He is wise enough to know that Clark Gable is the virtuous man his daughter should marry. In *Holiday* (1938), Cary Grant's stepparents have integrity and help him find his way. Katharine Hepburn's father, who values money and status too much, is at least present and manages to convey a certain patriarchal dignity. In the very first scene of *The Big Sleep*, Philip Marlowe, played by Humphrey Bogart, meets General Sternwood, a representative of the old order, who is now consigned to a wheelchair, a sign that the old order is fading. Even though he is not seen again, he is a pivotal point of the movie.

In *The Graduate* (1967), plastics is no more interesting to Dustin Hoffman than banking was to Cary Grant. But he has no one to guide him. His parents and their friends are all fools. How can he grow up when he has no models to emulate? He is like James Dean in *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955). Dean wasn't rebelling against authority so much as against the lack of it. His was a cry of protest against the *absence* of masculine virtue and adult authority. His father, played by Jim Backus, wears an apron—the symbol of the gelded male. While James Dean fights back, Dustin Hoffman flounders. Hoffman, like Clark Gable, runs off with the girl just before her vows to another man. But whereas in *It Happened One Night* there is unequivocal triumph, Hoffman and his bride, while escaping, have nowhere to go. They sit in the back of the bus, cut adrift, unconnected to any person or tradition that could guide them toward adulthood.

An Unmarried Woman (1978) shows what could be Hoffman and his wife 11 years later. Theirs is a world without fathers or mothers or family members. Their marriage ends when the wife, played by Jill Clayburgh, leaves her husband after he confesses that he is having an affair. We see her at the end being blown about by the wind, alone on the streets of Manhattan.

In the 80's, things are even worse. Decadence has turned to barbarism. Everybody is now a victim. It is *Every Man for Himself* (1980), to use an apt title of one of Jean-Luc Godard's movies. In its extreme form, the women are dangerous killers and the men expendable, as in *Black Widow*. In 50 years, movies have gone from depicting men and women as virtuous adults in moral dramas of good and evil to the acting out of case studies of men and women as pathetic, weak, barbaric, pathological, and deracinated children.

Fatal Attraction runs the gamut of 1980's pathologies. Since it is a box office hit we must assume that it expresses quite well the spirit of the times and is striking a chord with millions of

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Americans.

Michael Douglas has an affair with Glenn Close, not because he has fallen in love or because he has a bad marriage, but because there is no internal set of rules and no parent or wise friend or community pressure to stop him. The old order has vanished. He is a decent but weak man. He is not really in command. He can't even get his umbrella to open correctly; he calls for a waiter in a restaurant and no one comes. Close, like a child angry at being abandoned, proceeds to terrorize Douglas and his family. She has lost her femininity and become an irrational force against which he, the modern weak male, is powerless.

It has been suggested that this movie represents a return to family values, since Douglas is happily married and has a child. Nothing could be further from the truth. True, his wife is lovely—far more beautiful than the Medusa-faced Close—and as accommodating as Donna Reed, but the marriage is only a foil for the murderous exchanges between Douglas and Close. The family is a house of cards. Douglas and his family move from the anonymous hell of New York City to the isolation of the suburbs. There is neither community nor parents—Close's father died of a heart attack in 1958, and the wife's parents, though present, play no part. The police are completely ineffectual, and there is no escaping Glenn Close.

Fatal Attraction has much in common with *The Birds* (1963), *Jaws* (1975), and *Aliens* (1986). Irrational, violent forces erupt and threaten orderly, rational, civilized society. These movies seem to say that modernity itself goes against Natural Law, and that when Nature's laws are broken, she fights back with irrational, unappeasable forces. The degree of the danger, the scope of the problem, can be measured by the extent to which male authority and protection is still there. In *The Birds*, Rod Taylor protects three generations of women from the attacks of the birds. In *Jaws*, Robert Shaw, the representative of the old adult male, gets eaten by the shark, leaving the boyish Richard Dreyfuss and Roy Scheider, who has a foot in both camps. In *Aliens*, the men are all ineffectual; a woman and a robot save the day. In *Fatal Attraction*, the man cannot protect himself or his family from the crazed killer with the knife.

It is true that, like the media in general, the movies are dominated by an elite, whose views do not represent the sentiments of millions of us. And certainly most movies today only add to society's problems—reinforcing and legitimizing them—by presenting them on the screen without moral compass.

Nonetheless, I believe it is equally true that movies—as part of popular culture—unconsciously reflect current attitudes. Seen in this light, movies are cultural artifacts, signs to be interpreted, mirrors of the society we live in. In this light, the past 50 years have witnessed an increase in male/female confrontation and the fading of the adult world. These would seem to be symptoms of a deep spiritual malaise. The feminists would like to blame men for all the ills of the world. The evidence from the movies is against this view. Men and women have found it equally difficult to grow up. What the movies seem to be telling us is that people are living against the grain of human nature, and they are paying the price.

Richard Hobby has contributed film criticism to the Boston Globe *and Maine Public Radio.*

POP CULTURE

The War Toys Meltdown

by Betsy Clarke

At Circus World, Mattel's Rattlor, a Masters of the Universe character, glares at his potential purchasers. "Sounds fearsome battle rattle before attacking," the package advertises. The action figure is an "evil snake man creature with the quick strike head." Price: $3.98. LJN Toys, Ltd., on the other hand, offers Thundercats Berserkers Hammerhand, which comes complete with operating instructions: "Squeeze the powerful lever and scissors control to make Hammerhead Grab and Smash his opponent with his huge 'iron fist.'" Price: $4.98.

Fifty-seven dollars will buy Mattel's Bravestarr Space Cowboys, whose package pictures two futuristic figures blasting each other with lasers while an evil prisoner escapes the "planetary jail." A window, boasts the package, "blows out." A bank vault "blows open."

Down the wide corridor and around the corner of Columbia, Missouri's, new mall, a better dressed crowd examines the inventory of Walden Kids, an upscale toy store stocked with Fisher-Price and Brio and socially enlightened reading material on Squanto, Marie Curie, and Malcolm X. Foreign language cassettes, birdhouse building sets, Lionel trains, and "stellar exploration sets" round out the offerings. "Help Save Us" tags around the necks of stuffed whales, koalas, and pandas advise softhearted buyers that "a percentage of this sale is being donated to World Wildlife Fund." The lion costs $79.95.

Any war toys? Painted soldiers?

"No," replied the clerk crisply. "Everything here is technically genderless."

The major groups opposing war toys generally have other issues as their main foci. The War Resisters League, an international organization, works to promote the unilateral disarmament of the United States and Great Britain, according to Rick Gaumer, a staffer with the group's New England chapter. He says the organization does not call on the Soviet Union to disarm because of its "complex political problems" and because that country was not the first to develop nuclear technology. When Coleco introduced the Rambo doll, downplaying its violent attributes and emphasizing it as a "hero and justice-seeking individual," WRL was having none of it. The group put out a pamphlet in a plastic bag called a "Rambo Doll Body Bag" urging people to write to Coleco to protest its manufacture. The pamphlet's headline reads, *Rambo America's Hero Wants You Dead.*

The National Coalition on Television Violence, another major force against war toys, has a slightly different emphasis, but still sometimes addresses its mailing list with "Dear Peace Activist." Concerned about the amount of violence on all television shows, the group became especially alarmed about the violent Saturday morning cartoons sponsored by toy companies. But NCTV has other concerns about

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these shows, not the least of which is the clear distinction between good and evil, as well as their alleged sexism. Transformers and G.I. Joe ("the bad guys wear red uniforms") drew particular scorn, and NCTV didn't care for the roles allotted to women. "One good soldier and one evil soldier are females, the rest are males," pouts NCTV.

The group's interests continue to expand to include sexism, alcohol and drug glorification, and firearms in the home. In fairness, NCTV has criticized Gloria Steinem and Geraldine Ferraro for their enjoyment of pro wrestling. Currently, NCTV is battling the Christian Broadcasting Network for airing violent shows.

NCTV approaches the world with a grim literalness and a progressive agenda. The organization regularly rates movies and television shows not only for their violent themes but for their enlightened social attitude. Disney's *Lady and the Tramp* was considered relatively harmless ("violence includes biting, fighting, chasing, shooting") but not commendable, either. *The Nutcracker* movie received the same treatment ("violence includes a battle between soldiers and mice using swords, bayonets, and cannons"). Recommended for their "pro-social material" were *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* and *Desert Hearts*. Both had homosexual themes.

Also active in this cause are family and women's disarmament organizations, most notably the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, which tends to profess neutrality in matters of peace and war but always seems to side with U.S. enemies. The group's other activities are somewhat baffling, however. In their November 1985 newsletter they expressed concern over the manufacture of a doll for boys called a Nukie: "The Nukie is a stuffed velvet doll in the shape of a missile, manufactured in the U.S. At $20, less than a cabbage patch doll, it is a bargain, for it comes with an ownership card saying the owner is a 'certified nuclear power' with a 'sphere of influence—the right to set up puppet dictatorships and all the rights and powers of a thermonuclear war!'" Despite such a specific description, no one has ever seen a Nukie. Rick Gaumer said his people tried to track down the toy but could find neither a manufacturer nor the toy itself. Gaumer believes the toy did exist. Toy industry spokeswoman Jody Levin has never heard of it. Still, the rumor became moderately widespread, appearing as fact on the op-ed pages of some local papers. (WILPF also helped organize "operation dismantle" and threatened civil disobedience if the toy appeared in Canada.)

The four major objections to war toys were printed in a flier entitled "War Is No Toy" and circulated by Toronto's War Toys Boycott Campaign, Parenting for Peace and Justice, and other like-minded groups.

> War toys promote war, they are also "sexist," "racist," and "classist" [sic]. War toys teach children that war is a normal way of settling disputes.

In an attempt to answer the charge of sexism, Mattel introduced She-Ra, an "action female," and her arch-rival, Catra, in 1985 to satisfy a small but growing demand. Linda Sojacy, writing in her September 1985 *Working Woman*, cited the percentage of action toys and collectibles purchased by girls as 4 percent of the $290 million total retail purchases in 1980, compared to 10 percent of the $500 million spent in 1983. Still, anti-war toys activists remain unsatisfied on the issue. *Ms.* magazine's Emily Sweet, in her December 1985 article, "Toys for Free Children, The Fourteenth Annual Guide to the Best New Toys," sets out the kind of fun modern children should experience through toys: "nonsexist, multiracial, and peaceful fun and learning." Classism is apparently acceptable, since her list included a $195.00 set of blocks.

The first International Days Against War Toys, conceived as a time of leafletting, petition signing, and demonstrating, took place November 29 and 30, 1985. Conceived by the Alliance for Non-Violent Action in Toronto, the idea was publicized in the United States by the War Resisters League, New England Chapter, in Norwich, Connecticut. Support came from around the country and the usual suspects, including the National Coalition on Television Violence and various local chapters of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Pledge of Resistance, Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament, and from various Quaker, Catholic, and other religious groups. Canada's Pax Christi and Voice of Women, European Nuclear Disarmament, and Australia's People for Nuclear Disarmament lent their names and gave the days their claim to international fame.

A second International Days of Protest Against War Toys was held November 28 and 29, 1986, receiving some national publicity but little other tribute. The third took place November 27 and 28, 1987. February 13 and 14, 1987, brought more war toys protests, focusing primarily on the toy industry's Toy Fair and Valentine's Day shoppers in New York and celebrities in California. Educators for Social Responsibility, Mobilization for Survival, and the New England War Resisters League promoted the event, which was to culminate in the melting of war toys in a "peace bonfire." Melted war toys are to be used eventually in the construction of a "statue for peace."

Naturally, opponents and manufacturers of war toys disagree on the reasons that such playthings remain popular. The anti-war-toys forces blame the violent culture generally and Ronald Reagan particularly for glorifying war and violence. For example, plagued by G.I. Joe's low sales figures in America's period of self-loathing, Hasbro discontinued the figure in 1978. Manufacture resumed in 1982. The December 1983 *Multinational Monitor* lamented the return of G.I. Joe and saw a direct link between the toy and American imperialism in Grenada. The outlook is worth noting: "For the second time in history, American troops have invaded and occupied a socialist country. But unlike the first attempt in 1951, when a U.S. invasion of North Korea was repulsed by Chinese forces, this time the U.S. looks like it's going to stay." When U.S. Armed Forces ran bombing raids against Libya, NCTV issued a press release deploring it.

Toy industry spokeswoman Levin does not dispute that the popularity of war toys may be a by-product of a conservative government, but she asserts that children have always pretended violence, and for some valid reasons. "Scary things are happening in

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the world," she said in a September conversation. Children and adults have both reawakened to the necessity of weapons as guards against terrorist acts. More generally, she continues, "Kids want a sense of control." Indeed, Fred Rogers, host of Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood, wrote in 1985 that, though parents need not indulge play they dislike, playing with toy guns may have benefits: "When you're small and young and being told what to do all the time, it can be a good feeling to be in charge for a change. In fact, this is something that children *need* to play out." Playing while fortified with such pretend weapons enables children to feel assertive in a world over which they have no control.

Studies investigating the damage that playing with such toys may have on children have proved inconclusive. *NCTV News* reports that 40 studies show that children's aggression level increases after playing with war toys. Some of these studies are unpublished, however, and others report that an observer would not necessarily notice the slightly increased aggression level. The *Maclean's* article quoted a McGill University psychologist who conceded that children become more aggressive when playing with such toys, but that the jury is still out on the issue of whether the effects of such play are long lasting. The University of Pennsylvania's Brian Sutton-Smith insists that children can easily separate fantasy from reality in the world of combat. Experiments conducted at England's Sussex University turn the tables on the critics of war toys. Nursery school children were divided into two groups: a "progressive" group given only nonviolent toys to play with in a relatively unsupervised area and a supervised group given toy guns. The "progressive group" subjected each other to far more violent acts than did the unsupervised group. The researchers suggest that refusing to allow children to play with war toys may confuse them into thinking that "saying 'bang, bang, you're dead' is worse than actually hitting another infant with a brick."

Perhaps the answer *is* peace through strength.

Betsy Clarke is a lawyer and adjunct assistant professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia Law School.

POLEMICS & EXCHANGES

On 'Yale Scholar's Articles Found in Nazi Paper'

My attention was caught by your note (April '88, page 5) "Yale scholar's articles found in Nazi paper. . . . " The subject of "deconstruction" brought the following to mind. "Moral relativism" is frequently said to stem from Einstein's theories of relativity. This claim is, of course, utter nonsense. Einstein's theories concern the behavior of high-speed "reference frames" as seen by different observers (special relativity) and gravitation (general relativity). They have nothing whatever to do with ethics.

Although I have not heard it explicitly claimed, I wonder if the "deconstructionists" may have been influenced in some way by quantum theory, the "Heisenberg uncertainty principle" in particular. Although the meaning of quantum uncertainty is still debated over 60 years after its original formulation, it can very crudely be stated as follows: the act of observation changes the state of the observed system, making its state before observation indeterminate. The statement may have given some (erroneous) support to "deconstructionism" by being carried over into literary criticism as a sort of vulgar uncertainty — the encounter by the reader with a passage of words would be said to change their meaning.

I am a research scientist (space physics) with NASA.

—Robert C. Whitten
Cupertino, CA

The Editor Replies

It is really a chicken-and-egg business. Did quantum theory, however misunderstood, lead to moral relativity and deconstructionism, or was Heisenberg (a Platonist, by the way!) simply convenient ammunition? I think the latter, since G.E. Moore's *Principia Ethica* came out in 1903. Even Moore may not have been as bad as his admirers (Lytton Strachey, for example) made him out to be. In the hands of ideologues, the evidence of science and philosophy can be manipulated as easily as the language of love in the backseat of a car.

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